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*PERSONAL NARRATIVE OF A JOURNEY*

THROUGH

CENTRAL ARABIA

Not in vain the nation-strivings, nor by chance the currents flow ;  
Error-mazed, yet truth-directed, to their certain goal they go

TEY'VEEVAT EL KÖBRA', BY EBN-EL-FÄRİD

فَلَا عَمَإً وَالْخَلْقَ لَمْ يَخْلُقُوا نَدَى - وَإِنْ لَمْ تَكُنْ أَعَالِمُهُم بِالسَّيِّدَةِ

PERSONAL NARRATIVE OF  
*A YEAR'S JOURNEY THROUGH*  
CENTRAL AND EASTERN  
ARABIA

(1862-63)

BY

WILLIAM GIFFORD PALGRAVE

LATE OF THE EIGHTH REGIMENT BOMBAY N. I.



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TO THE MEMORY  
OF  
CARSTEN NIEBUHR

IN HONOUR OF THAT  
INTELLIGENCE AND COURAGE  
WHICH FIRST OPENED ARABIA TO EUROPE

*I respectfully Dedicate*

THE RESULTS OF A JOURNEY  
ITSELF INSPIRED BY THAT GREAT MEMORY



## PREFACE

A JOURNEY undertaken through Central and Eastern Arabia, with the purpose of observing rather than of publishing, put me in possession of certain details upon those parts of the great Peninsula, which may be worth recording. It is true that the circumstances of my visit, and the restraints inseparable from native disguise, abridged antiquarian research, impeded botanical or geological enquiry, and deprived me of the means for exact and scientific investigation; for instance, of the customary requisites for verifying longitudes and latitudes, or determining the degrees of heat and cold, of moisture and aridity. Worse yet! I was at times unable to take down a single note, much less could I display a sketching book or photographic apparatus, however fair the landscape and tempting the sun; and hence my pen must unaided do the work of the pencil as well as its own, while my reader's imagination may help to supply the rest. Why this was so, a few pages of the narrative will make clear. On the other hand long years, the best part of my life indeed, passed in the East, familiarity with the Arabic language till it became to me almost a mother tongue, and experience in the ways and manners of "Semitic" nations, to give them their general or symbolic name, supplied me with advantages counterbalancing in some degree the drawbacks enumerated above. Besides, the men of the land,



rather than the land of the men, were my main object of research and principal study. My attention was directed to the moral, intellectual, and political conditions of living Arabia, rather than to the physical phenomena of the country,—of great indeed, but, to me, of inferior interest. Meanwhile whatever observations on antiquity and science, on plants and stones, geography and meteorology I was able to make, I shall give, regretting only their inevitable imperfection.

In the hard attempt to render Arab orthography by English letters, I have for the most part followed the system adopted by Lane in his delightful “Modern Egyptians,” as the nearest approximation intelligible to English readers. However, in representing the initial “Jeem” by “Dj” rather than by “j” (as in the middle or at the end of a word), I have quitted our countryman for the universal foreign method; nor have I generally thought it necessary to accent vowels, contenting myself with an occasional mark (˘) of length, where uniformity of pronunciation appeared to require it. The few maps annexed, though without pretension to that exact nicety which sextants and measuring-lines can alone afford, may serve in some measure to illustrate the leading features and divisions of the principal provinces, towns, and country in general.

In the present volume, my aim has been to offer the reader the personal narration of my adventures in Arabia. For fuller details on the religion, politics, and customs of the inhabitants, he is referred to the original work.

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# JOURNEY AND RESIDENCE IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN ARABIA

## CHAPTER I

### THE DESERT AND ITS INHABITANTS

But I hold the gray barbarian lower than the Christian child.—*A. Tennyson*

*Departure from Ma'ān—Our Bedouin Companions—Our own Equipment and Disguise—Wells of Wokba—Five days of Stony Desert—Mode of Travelling—First News of Telāl-ebn-Rasheed—Wells—Approach to Wadi Serhān—Hills—Semoom—View of the Desert—Its Change at Wadi Serhān—Sherarat Encampment—Bedouin Hospitality and Conversation—Their Social Condition—Samḥ and Meṣaā'—Bedouin Wars—Route of Wadi Serhān: Sand-hills and Ghaḍa—Remarks on the Camel—'Azzām Sherarat of Ma'gooda'—Change of Guides—Route to Djowf: Ostriches, Scorpions—Djebal-el-Djowf: Village of Djoon—First Meeting with the Men of Djowf—Gorges of the Valley.*

“ONCE for all let us attempt to acquire a fairly correct and comprehensive knowledge of the Arabian Peninsula. With its coasts we are already in great measure acquainted; several of its maritime provinces have been, if not thoroughly, at least sufficiently, explored; Yemen and Ḥejāz, Mecca and Medinah, are no longer mysteries to us, nor are we wholly without information on the districts of Ḥaḍramaut and 'Omān. But of the interior of the vast region, of its plains and mountains, its tribes and cities, of its governments and institutions, of its inhabitants, their ways and customs, of their social condition, how far advanced in civilization or sunk in barbarism, what do we as yet really know, save from accounts necessarily wanting in fulness and precision? It is time to fill up this blank in the map of Asia, and this, at whatever risks, we will now endeavour; either the land before us shall be our tomb, or we will traverse

it in its fullest breadth, and know what it contains from shore to shore. *Vestigia nulla retrorsum.*"

Such were my thoughts, and such, more or less, I should suppose, those of my companion, when we found ourselves at fall of night without the eastern gate of Ma'an, while the Arabs, our guides and fellow-travellers, filled their water-skins from a gushing source hard by the town walls, and adjusted the saddles and the burdens of their camels, in preparation for the long journey that lay before us and them. It was the evening of the 16th June 1862; the largest stars were already visible in the deep blue depths of a cloudless sky, while the crescent moon, high to the west, shone as she shines in those heavens, and promised us assistance for some hours of our night march. We were soon mounted on our meagre long-necked beasts, "as if," according to the expression of an Arab poet, "we and our men were at mast-heads," and now we set our faces to the east. Behind us lay, in a mass of dark outline, the walls and castle of Ma'an, its houses and gardens, and farther back in the distance the high and barren range of the Sheraa' mountains, merging into the coast chain of Hejāz. Before and around us extended a wide and level plain, blackened over with countless pebbles of basalt and flint, except where the moonbeams gleamed white on little intervening patches of clear sand, or on yellowish streaks of withered grass, the scanty product of the winter rains, and now dried into hay. Over all a deep silence, which even our Arab companions seemed fearful of breaking; when they spoke it was in a half whisper and in few words, while the noiseless tread of our camels sped stealthily but rapidly through the gloom, without disturbing its stillness.

Some precaution was not indeed wholly out of place, for that stage of the journey on which we were now entering was anything but safe. We were bound for the Djowf, the nearest inhabited district of Central Arabia, its outlying station, in fact. Now the intervening tract offered for the most part the double danger of robbers and of thirst, of marauding bands and of the summer season. The distance itself to be traversed was near two hundred miles in a straight line, and unavoidable circumstances were likely to render it much longer. For the wells, the landmarks of the traveller, and according to which he needs must shape his course, are not ordinarily arranged in



lines of mathematical straightness ; and, besides, the necessity of avoiding districts frequented by hostile or suspected tribes often obliges the Bedouin to adopt some unaccustomed and circuitous route.

Nor was the society itself that we were actually in of a nature much to reassure the mind, especially at the outset of such a journey. On my own comrade, indeed—a native of the village of Zahleh, in the plains of Cœlo-Syria—I could fully rely. Hardy, young, and enterprising, he belonged to a locality whose inhabitants are accustomed to danger, while the contempt with which they look down on the neighbouring populations renders them habitually less susceptible than most of their countrymen to the ordinary impressions of fear in a strange land. But our Bedouin companions were a strange set : they were three in number ; their leader, Salim-el-'Aṭneh, belonged to the Howeytat Arabs, a numerous and energetic tribe inhabiting the mountain district from Kerak on the Dead Sea shore to Ma'ān. Our friend himself was a member of a powerful family among them, and near akin to the chiefs of the clan ; but he had rendered himself so unfortunately conspicuous by repeated acts of robbery and pillage, with a supplementary murder now and then, that his position was at present hardly better than that of an outlaw. Lean in make and swarthy of features, his thin compressed lips implied settled resolution and daring purpose, while the calmness of his grey eye showed a cool and thoughtful disposition, not without some possible intimation of treachery.

However, whatever drawbacks might exist in his outward appearance, or in his too well known personal history, his good sense and manly character afforded some ground of confidence in his present fidelity ; a brave and foresighted man, however unprincipled, may always be trusted to a certain extent. But I can hardly say so much for his two companions, 'Alee and Djordee, Sherarat Bedouins, and utter barbarians in appearance no less than in character, wild, fickle, reckless, and the capacity of whose intellect was as scanty as its cultivation. Indeed, Salim himself more than once advised us to avoid all familiarity with them, lest it should diminish the involuntary awe of the savage for civilized man.

A long and very dirty shirt, reaching nearly to the ankles, a

black cotton handkerchief over the head, fastened on by a twist of camel's hair, a tattered cloak, striped white and brown, a leather girdle, much the worse for wear, from which dangled a rusty knife, a long-barrelled and cumbrous matchlock, a yet longer sharp-pointed spear, a cartouche-belt, broken and coarsely patched up with thread—such was the accoutrement of these worthies, and such, indeed, is the ordinary Bedouin guise on a journey. Salim's own rigging out was of the same description, only the respective items were of a somewhat better quality.

Myself and my companion were dressed like ordinary middle-class travellers of inner Syria ; an equipment in which we had already made our way from Gaza on the sea-coast to Ma'ān without much remark or unseasonable questioning from those whom we fell in with, while we traversed a country so often described already by Pococke, Laborde, and downwards, under the name of Arabia Petræa, that it would be superfluous for me to enter into any new account of it in the present work. Our dress then consisted partly of a long stout blouse of Egyptian hemp, under which, unlike our Bedouin fellow-travellers, we indulged in the luxury of the loose cotton drawers common in the East, while our coloured head-kerchiefs, though simple enough, were girt by 'aḳḳals or head-bands of some pretension to elegance ; the loose red leather boots of the country completed our toilet.

But in the large travelling-sacks at our camels' sides were contained suits of a more elegant appearance, carefully concealed from Bedouin gaze, but destined for appearance when we should reach better inhabited and more civilized districts. This reserve toilet numbered articles like the following : coloured overdresses, the Syrian combaz, handkerchiefs where silk stripes relieved the plebeian cotton, and girdles of good material and tasteful colouring ; such clothes being absolutely requisite to maintain our assumed character. Mine was that of a native travelling doctor, a quack if you will ; and accordingly a tolerable dress was indispensable for the credit of my medical practice. My comrade, who in a general way passed for my brother-in-law, appeared sometimes as a retail merchant, such as not unfrequently visit these countries, and sometimes as pupil or associate in my assumed profession.



Our pharmacopœia consisted of a few but well selected and efficacious drugs, inclosed in small tight-fitting tin boxes, stowed away for the present in the ample recesses of our travelling-bags ; about fifty of these little cases contained wherewithal to kill or cure half the sick men of Arabia. Medicines of a liquid form had been as much as possible omitted, not only from the difficulty of ensuring them a safe transport amid so rough a mode of journeying, but also on account of the rapid evaporation unavoidable in this dry and burning climate. In fact two or three small bottles, whose contents had seemed to me of absolute necessity, soon retained nothing save their labels to indicate what they had held, in spite of air-tight stoppers and double coverings. I record this, because the hint may be useful to any one who should be inclined to embark in similar guise on the same adventures.

Some other objects requisite in medical practice, two or three European books for my own private use, and kept carefully secret from Arab curiosity, with a couple of Esculapian treatises in good Arabic, intended for professional ostentation, completed this part of our fitting-out. But besides these, an ample provision of cloth, handkerchiefs, glass necklaces, pipe-bowls, and the like, for sale in whatever localities might not offer sufficient facility for the healing art, filled up our saddle-bags well nigh to bursting. Last, but not least, two large sacks of coffee, the sheet-anchor and main hope of our commerce, formed alone a sufficient load for a vigorous camel. And now to our march once more.

Several hours of a rapid trot had already borne us far from Ma'ān, and the reddening moonlight was almost faded from the west, when our guides halted on a little patch of dry grass amid the black and stony plain, and after interchanging a few words, made the camels kneel down, discharged them of their burdens, and then turned them loose to graze at will, while one of the band kept watch, and the rest lay down for a few hours' sleep near the baggage, which we had piled up close by ; it was, however, a mere nap, and the first clear streak of light had hardly appeared in the east below the silvery morning star, when we were aroused to relade our beasts, and remount for our onward journey.

We had ridden many a weary mile ; it was now about two hours before noon, and the heat was most oppressive, when we

saw before us some scattered and dwarfish trees, indications of the waters of Wok̄ba, towards which our course had been directed. While we were yet at some distance from the spot, one of our Bedouins urged forward his camel to a sort of canter, and set off in a circuitous line to assure himself that no individuals of a hostile tribe were lurking in the neighbourhood of the wells. But friend or enemy, nobody was there, all was silent; and the ruined walls of an abandoned village, scattered up and down on the gravelly slopes and by the dry bed of a winter torrent, looked hopelessly desolate in the steady glare of noon. Here several shallow pits, some half choked with stones, others offering a scanty supply of muddy and rather brackish water, presented themselves close by the thorny trees. From these wells we now filled the water-skins, an operation performed all the more carefully and thoroughly, since no other water whatever was to be had for five full days' journey ahead, put to it what speed we might; a serious consideration, especially in the latter days of June.

When all this was finished, we remounted, and set our camels' heads once more due east, while I turned to look round on the wide landscape. The blue range of Sheraa' was yet visible, though fast sinking in the distance, while before us and on either hand extended one weary plain in a black monotony of lifelessness. Only on all sides lakes of mirage lay mocking the eye with their clear and deceptive outline, whilst here and there some dark basaltic rock, cropping up at random through the level, was magnified by the refraction of the heated atmosphere into the semblance of a fantastic crag or overhanging mountain. Dreary land of death, in which even the face of an enemy were almost a relief amid such utter solitude. But for five whole days the little dried-up lizard of the plain, that looks as if he had never a drop of moisture in his ugly body, and the jerboaa', or field-rat of Arabia, were the only living creatures to console our view.

It was a march during which we might have almost repented of our enterprise, had such a sentiment been any longer possible or availing. Day after day found us urging our camels to their utmost pace, for fifteen or sixteen hours together out of the twenty-four, under a well-nigh vertical sun, which the Ethiopians of Herodotus might reasonably be excused for

cursing, with nothing either in the landscape around or in the companions of our way to relieve for a moment the eye or the mind. Then an insufficient halt for rest or sleep, at most of two or three hours, soon interrupted by the oft-repeated admonition, "if we linger here we all die of thirst," sounding in our ears ; and then to remount our jaded beasts and push them on through the dark night, amid the constant probability of attack and plunder from roving marauders. For myself, I was, to mend matters, under the depressing influence of a tertian fever contracted at Ma'ān, and what between weariness and low spirits, began to imagine seriously that no waters remained before us except the waters of death for us and of oblivion for our friends. The days wore by like a delirious dream, till we were often almost unconscious of the ground we travelled over and of the journey on which we were engaged. One only herb appeared at our feet to give some appearance of variety and life ; it was the bitter and poisonous colocynth of the desert.

Our order of road was this. Long before dawn we were on our way, and paced it till the sun, having attained about half-way between the horizon and the zenith, assigned the moment of alighting for our morning meal. This our Bedouins always took good care should be in some hollow or low ground, for concealment's sake ; in every other respect we had ample liberty of choice, for one patch of black pebbles with a little sand and withered grass between was just like another ; shade or shelter, or anything like them, was wholly out of the question in such "nakedness of the land." We then alighted, and my companion and myself would pile up the baggage into a sort of wall, to afford a half-screen from the scorching sun-rays, and here recline awhile. Next came the culinary preparations, in perfect accordance with our provisions, which were simple enough ; namely, a bag of coarse flour mixed with salt, and a few dried dates ; there was no third item on the bill of fare. We now took a few handfuls of flour, and one of the Bedouins kneaded it with his unwashed hands or dirty bit of leather, pouring over it a little of the dingy water contained in the skins, and then patted out this exquisite paste into a large round cake, about an inch thick, and five or six inches across. Meanwhile another had lighted a fire of dry grass, colocynth roots, and

dried camel's dung, till he had prepared a bed of glowing embers ; among these the cake was now cast, and immediately covered up with hot ashes, and so left for a few minutes, then taken out, turned, and covered again, till at last half-kneaded, half-raw, half-roasted, and burnt all round, it was taken out to be broken up between the hungry band, and eaten scalding hot, before it should cool into an indescribable leathery substance, capable of defying the keenest appetite. A draught of dingy water was its sole but suitable accompaniment.

The meal ended, we had again without loss of time to resume our way from mirage to mirage, till "slowly flaming over all, from heat to heat, the day decreased," and about an hour before sunset we would stagger off our camels as best we might, to prepare an evening feast of precisely the same description as that of the forenoon, or more often, for fear lest the smoke of our fire should give notice to some distant rover, to content ourselves with dry dates, and half an hour's rest on the sand. At last our dates, like Esop's bread sack, or that of Beyhas, his Arab prototype, came to an end ; and then our supper was a soldier's one ; what that is my military friends will know ; but grit and pebbles excepted, there was no bed in our case. After which, to remount, and travel on by moon or star light, till a little before midnight we would lie down for just enough sleep to tantalize, not refresh.

"Wilt thou go on with me?" gentle reader, for an Arab trip ? For myself, I confess that the remembrance of that exquisite little tale entitled the "Sleeping Beauty," by a friend, if he will allow me so to call him, whom to quote is to name, and of the moral therein contained—though its author archly denies its having any—did much to invigorate me on this and on similar occasions ; it's "the many fail, the one succeeds," and the "trust to light on something fair," kept up my courage, and thus may be fairly said to have "hooked it to some useful end," though perhaps not precisely the one intended by Mr. Tennyson. But my reader, like myself, must labour yet awhile through the difficulties of this desert "hedge," till he breaks in on the fair one in all her beauty, if, like the prince, his courage does not fail him ; better things lie before us in the next chapter.

But in addition to what encouragement my comrade and myself could gather from memory and inner thought, our



Bedouin companions too cheered us ever and anon, by assuring us that although this hasty manner of travelling was absolutely necessary in a land alike beset by drought and danger, we might hope for easier marches and lighter privations so soon as we should have reached the boundary frontier of Ṭelāl-ebn-Rasheed, the sovereign of Djebel Shomer. These desirable limits, said they, commenced at Wadi Serhān, or the Valley of Serhān, which we were fast approaching, and where water was good and copious, while the mighty name of Ṭelāl protected the region far and wide from fear of enemies and marauders by night and by day.

Much did our Bedouins talk of Ṭelāl, and much extol his vigour, his equity, his active vigilance, his military prowess, though at the same time they repined at his unwarrantable repression of Bedouin liberty, and the restraints he imposed on the innate rights of nomades to plunder, rob, and murder at their own free discretion—complaints which, contrary to the intention of our informants, rather raised than diminished our esteem for this ruler, be he who he might. We could, however, as yet obtain but little exact information about the personal history or the political position of this prince. Whether he was of supreme or of subaltern power, whether founder of his kingdom, or heir, what might be the extent or character of the kingdom itself, and much else, we would fain have learnt, and tried to gather from Salim, 'Alee, and Djorée, but to no end : their ideas and language on a matter so far above them were alike confused. All that we could for the moment know with certainty, was that this chief resided in a town called Hā'yel, situated in Djebel Shomer, somewhere to the south-east ; that he was very powerful ; that in his dominions neither plunder nor other violation of public order was permitted ; and that from Wadi Serhān, south and east, his word was law. With such information we were obliged to content ourselves for the present, in hope that nearer approach would make all clear.

It was now the 22nd of June, and the fifth day since our departure from the wells of Wokba. The water in the skins had little more to offer to our thirst than muddy dregs, and as yet no sign appeared of a fresh supply. At last about noon we drew near some hillocks of loose gravel and sandstone a little on our right ; our Bedouins conversed together awhile, and then

turned their course and ours in that direction. "Hold fast on your camels, for they are going to be startled and jump about," said Salim to us. Why the camels should be startled I could not understand ; when on crossing the mounds just mentioned, we suddenly came on five or six black tents, of the very poorest description, pitched near some wells excavated in the gravelly hollow below. The reason of Salim's precautionary hint now became evident, for our silly beasts started at first sight of the tents, as though they had never seen the like before, and then scampered about, bounding friskily here and there, till what between their jolting (for a camel's run much resembles that of a cow) and our own laughing, we could hardly keep on their backs. However, thirst soon prevailed over timidity, and they left off their pranks to approach the well's edge, and sniff at the water below.

We alighted. Immediately the denizens of the tents, a few women and one or two old men belonging to the Sherarat tribe, which is scattered over the whole of this desert, approached to give their "*Marhaba*," "*Ya'hla*," *i.e.*, "welcome," "honoured guests," and so forth, and to ask many questions why and whence our journey. Nor was their curiosity without reason ; the route which had brought us was one little travelled at any time, especially by men from Damascus or its neighbourhood, and for such our dress and accent gave us out to be ; and still less at this period of the year, in the very height of summer. But we were too tired for much discourse, and far more desirous to get into a little shade after so long a running, than to hold protracted parley. So we left our Bedouins, themselves, too, well nigh worn out with fatigue, to draw water as they could from the wells and pour it into the little hollows close by for the benefit of their camels, an operation in which we should have been more of a hindrance than a help ; and, after due permission asked and granted, we crept into a low and narrow tent, whose black coverings were admirably calculated for the exclusion of the luminous and transmission of the caloriferous rays of the mid-day sun. Here we lay stretched out on the sand till it should please our companions to come and force us to rise. This the wretches attempted to do after a very short interval ; but we answered, that as we had now got a good supply of water, and had reached, or nearly so, the boundary

limits of Ebn-Rasheed, they could have no sufficient motive for being in such tremendous haste. Salim, arch-weary as he was, admitted the force of our argument, and we remained under cover till the declining sun and cooler air. Meanwhile the mistress of the tent, an ugly good-natured looking hag, like most Bedouin dames, entertained us with a long diatribe on the tyranny of Ebn-Rasheed, and the coercion he exercised over her countrymen, from which we concluded that he was probably doing the duty of an order-loving king, and esteemed him accordingly.

When in the afternoon we resumed our way once more, we found the general appearance of the desert somewhat modified by larger patches of sand or grass on its black surface, and these continued to increase in number and size as we went on. Next day, the 23rd of the month, yet clearer signs of our approach to Wadi Sirhan became visible, and as we took a somewhat northerly direction in order to join in with that valley, we sighted far off in the extreme distance a blue range of hills, running from west to east, and belonging to the Syro-Arabic waste, though unnoticed, to the best of my knowledge, in European maps. Meanwhile the sand-patches continued to increase and deepen on all sides, and our Bedouins flattered themselves with reaching Wadi Sirhan before nightfall.

Here, however, an incident occurred which had well nigh put a premature end to the travels and the travellers together. My readers, no less than myself, must have heard or read many a story of the semoom, or deadly wind of the desert, but for me I had never yet met it in full force; and its modified form, or shelook, to use the Arab phrase, that is, the sirocco of the Syrian waste, though disagreeable enough, can hardly ever be termed dangerous. Hence I had been almost inclined to set down the tales told of the strange phenomena and fatal effects of this "poisoned gale" in the same category with the moving pillars of sand, recorded in many works of higher historical pretensions than "Thalaba." At those perambulatory columns and sand-smothered caravans the Bedouins, whenever I interrogated them on the subject, laughed outright, and declared that beyond an occasional dust storm, similar to those which any one who has passed a summer in Scinde can hardly fail to have experienced, nothing of the romantic kind just



alluded to occurred in Arabia. But when questioned about the semoom, they always treated it as a much more serious matter, and such in real earnest we now found it.

It was about noon, the noon of a summer solstice in the unclouded Arabian sky over a scorched desert, when abrupt and burning gusts of wind began to blow by fits from the south, while the oppressiveness of the air increased every moment, till my companion and myself mutually asked each other what this could mean, and what was to be its result. We turned to enquire of Salim, but he had already wrapped up his face in his mantle, and, bowed down and crouching on the neck of his camel, replied not a word. His comrades, the two Sherarat Bedouins, had adopted a similar position, and were equally silent. At last, after repeated interrogations, Salim, instead of replying directly to our questioning, pointed to a small black tent, providentially at no great distance in front, and said, "try to reach *that*, if we can get there we are saved." He added, "take care that your camels do not stop and lie down ;" and then, giving his own several vigorous blows, relapsed into muffled silence.

We looked anxiously towards the tent ; it was yet a hundred yards off, or more. Meanwhile the gusts grew hotter and more violent, and it was only by repeated efforts that we could urge our beasts forward. The horizon rapidly darkened to a deep violet hue, and seemed to draw in like a curtain on every side ; while at the same time a stifling blast, as though from some enormous oven opening right on our path, blew steadily under the gloom ; our camels too began, in spite of all we could do, to turn round and round and bend their knees preparing to lie down. The semoom was fairly upon us.

Of course we had followed our Arabs' example by muffling our faces, and now with blows and kicks we forced the staggering animals onwards to the only asylum within reach. So dark was the atmosphere, and so burning the heat, that it seemed that hell had risen from the earth, or descended from above. But we were yet in time, and at the moment when the worst of the concentrated poison-blast was coming around, we were already prostrate one and all within the tent, with our heads well wrapped-up, almost suffocated indeed, but safe ; while our camels lay without like dead, their

long necks stretched out on the sand awaiting the passing of the gale.

On our first arrival the tent contained a solitary Bedouin woman, whose husband was away with his camels in the Wadi Sirhan. When she saw five handsome men, like us, rush thus suddenly into her dwelling without a word of leave or salutation, she very properly set up a scream to the tune of the four crown pleas, murder, arson, robbery, and I know not what else. Salim hastened to reassure her by calling out "friends," and without more words threw himself flat on the ground. All followed his example in silence.

We remained thus for about ten minutes, during which a still heat like that of red-hot iron slowly passing over us was alone to be felt. Then the tent walls began again to flap in the returning gusts, and announced that the worst of the semoom had gone by. We got up, half dead with exhaustion, and unmuffled our faces. My comrades appeared more like corpses than living men, and so, I suppose, did I. However, I could not forbear, in spite of warnings, to step out and look at the camels; they were still lying flat as though they had been shot. The air was yet darkish, but before long it brightened up to its usual dazzling clearness. During the whole time that the semoom lasted, the atmosphere was entirely free from sand or dust; so that I hardly know-how to account for its singular obscurity.

Our hostess, once freed from her not unwarrantable alarms, had also remained motionless and well wrapped-up in a corner of the tent till the worst was over, and then, by the active vivacity of her tongue, she gave the best possible proof that the semoom left no dumbness by way of symptom behind it, and satisfied all her pent-up curiosity regarding us after the involuntary restraint imposed by the circumstances of our first introduction. Late in the evening we continued our way; and next day early entered Wadi Sirhan, where the character of our journey underwent a considerable modification. For the northerly Arabian desert, which we are now traversing, offers, in spite of all its dreariness, some spots of comparatively better cast, where water is less scanty and vegetation less niggard. These spots are the favourite resorts of Bedouins, and serve too to direct the ordinary routes of whatever travellers, trade-led or

from other motives, may venture on this wilderness. These oases, if indeed they deserve the name, are formed by a slight depression in the surrounding desert surface, and take at times the form of a long valley, or of an oblong patch, where rock and pebble give place to a light soil more or less intermixed with sand, and concealing under its surface a tolerable supply of moisture at no great distance below ground. Here in consequence bushes and herbs spring up, and grass, if not green all the year round, is at least of somewhat longer duration than elsewhere; certain fruit-bearing plants, of a nature to suffice for meagre Bedouin existence, grow here spontaneously; in a word, man and beast find not exactly comfortable accommodation, but the absolutely needful supply. Such a spot is Wadi Sirhan, literally "the Valley of the Wolf," probably so called from some old tradition in which that animal made a principal figure, but the precise origin of the name is lost amid the uncertainty of past Arab days. This long and sinuous depression bears in the main from north-west to south-east, or nearly so, and reaches across half the northern desert like a long ladder whose head is placed near Bosra in the Howran, at no great distance from Damascus, while its base rests on the Djowf, the preliminary province and vestibule of central Arabia. Thus it affords the customary route for mercantile business to and fro between Syria and the Djowf. In addition, the numerous Syro-Arabic tribes of the Ru'alah Bedouins frequent its upper extremity, while the centre and south-eastern portions are almost exclusively tenanted by the Sherarat Arabs. No other valley of equal length, and, I cannot say equal fertility, but of less absolute barrenness, exists in this part of the country. Water is almost everywhere to be found throughout Wadi Sirhan at a depth varying from ten to twenty feet, and the vegetation offers a certain degree of abundance and variety.

It was on the 24th of June that we entered this valley, glad to find ourselves at last on the high road—though the phrase hardly suits a land where no roads soever exist—to the Djowf; while our Bedouins, equally tired with ourselves of chawing dry dates and cinder cake, entertained us with anticipatory descriptions of the hospitable greeting we should daily meet with in the Valley of the Wolf.

In fact we had not long wound among the little sandy hills

which stud this low ground, when we saw far and near planted amid the bushes numerous black tents, the dwellings of Kedar, likened once of a time by Solomon to his dusky Egyptian bride, but of so miserable an appearance that we felt little confidence in the realization of the "flattering tale" told us by Bedouin hope. The truth is, that among the miserable tribes of nomades that infest Arabia, the Sherarat are the most miserable. They own very few flocks of sheep; a horse is a rarity in the tribe; their entire wealth, if wealth it be, consists in their camels, and certainly of these last there is no want;—unlike the northern Bedouins, Seba'a, Ru'alah, Fiḏha'an, and their brethren, whose large droves of sheep, joined to numerous studs of horses, supply them with a certain opulence and means of trade, enabling them to live if not altogether like civilized beings, at least free from the privations and misery of mere savage life, the melancholy lot of our new friends, the Sherarat Arabs.

Scattered over the whole belt of desert just described, with Wadi Sirḥan for their ordinary gathering-place, the Sherarat acknowledge no common chief of their own, no general leader or head. They are divided and subdivided into countless bands, each of which has a separate chief, worthy in every respect of his subjects. Almost all, however, chiefs and clansmen, have been of late brought collectively under some kind of subservience by the iron arm of Ṭelāl, and pay him accordingly their tribute of yearly camels and daily grumbling. But the character and condition of these nomades will be sufficiently illustrated by our intercourse with them now about to commence.

Passing tent after tent, and leaving behind us many a tattered Bedouin and grazing camel, Salim at last indicated to us a group of habitations, two or three of which seemed of somewhat more ample dimensions than the rest, and informed us that our supper that night (for the afternoon was already on the decline) would be at the cost of these dwellings. "Ajaweed," *i.e.*, "generous fellows," he subjoined, to encourage us by the prospect of a handsome reception. Of course we could only defer to his better judgment; and in a few minutes were alongside of the black goat's-hair coverings where lodged our intended hosts.

The chief or chieftlet, for such he was, came out, and interchanged a few words of masonic laconism with Salim. The



latter then came up to us, where we remained halted in expectation, led our camels to a little distance from the tents, made them kneel down, helped us to disburden them, and while we installed ourselves on a sandy slope opposite to the abodes of the tribe, recommended us to keep a sharp look-out after our baggage, since there might be pickers and stealers among our hosts, for all "Ajaweed" as they were. Disagreeable news; for "Ajaweed" in an Arab mouth corresponds the nearest possible to our English "gentlemen." Now, if the gentlemen were thieves, what must the blackguards be? We put a good face on it, and then seated ourselves in dignified gravity on the sand awaiting the further results of our guide's negotiations.

For some time we remained undisturbed, though not unnoticed; a group of Arabs had collected round our companions at the tent door, and were engaged in getting from them all possible information, especially about us and our baggage, which last was an object of much curiosity, not to say cupidity. Next came our turn. The chief, his family (women excepted), his intimate followers, and some twenty others, young and old, boys and men, came up, and after a brief salutation, Bedouin-wise, seated themselves in a semicircle before us. Every man held a short crooked stick for camel-driving in his hand, to gesticulate with when speaking, or to play with in the intervals of conversation, while the younger members of society, less prompt in discourse, politely employed their leisure in staring at us, or in picking up dried pellets of dirt from the sand and tossing them about.

But how am I to describe their conversation, their questions and answers, their manners and gestures? "A sensible person in this city is like a man tied up among a drove of mules in a stable," I once heard from a respectable stranger in the Syrian town of Homs, a locality proverbial for the sullen stupidity of its denizens. But among Bedouins in the desert, where the advantages of the stable are wanting, the guest rather resembles a man in the middle of a field among untied mules frisking and kicking their heels in all directions around him. Here you may see human nature at its lowest stage, or very nearly; one sprawls stretched out on the sand, another draws unmeaning lines with the end of his stick, a third grins, a fourth asks purportless or impertinent questions, or cuts jokes meant for witty,

but in fact only coarse in the extreme. Meanwhile the boys thrust themselves forward without restraint, and interrupt their elders, their betters I can hardly say, without the smallest respect or deference.

And yet in all this there is no real intention of rudeness, no desire to annoy; quite the reverse. They sincerely wish to make themselves agreeable to the new comers, to put them at their ease, nay, to do them what good service they can, only they do not exactly know how to set about it; if they violate all laws of decorum or courtesy, it is out of sheer ignorance, not malice prepense; and amid the aimlessness of an utterly uncultivated mind they occasionally show indications of considerable innate tact and shrewdness; while through all the fickleness proper to men accustomed to no moral or physical restraint, there appears the groundwork of a manly and generous character, such as a Persian, for instance, seldom offers. Their defects are inherent to their condition, their redeeming qualities are their own; they have them by inheritance from one of the noblest races of earth; from the Arabs of inhabited lands and organized governments. Indeed, after having travelled much and made pretty intimate acquaintance with many races, African, Asiatic, and European, I should hardly be inclined to give the preference to any over the genuine unmixed clans of Central and Eastern Arabia. Now these last-mentioned populations are identical in blood and in tongue with the nomades of this desert, yet how immeasurably superior! The difference between a barbarous Highlander and an English gentleman, in "Rob Roy" or "Waverley," is hardly less striking. Let me subjoin a specimen of Bedouin conversation for my reader's better information.

"What are you? what is your business?" so runs the ordinary and unprefaced opening of the discourse. To which we answer, "Physicians from Damascus, and our business is whatsoever God may put in our way." The next question will be about the baggage; some one pokes it with a stick, to draw attention to it, and says, "What is this? have you any little object to sell us?"

We fight shy of selling: to open out our wares and chattels in full air, on the sand, and amid a crowd whose appearance and circumstances offer but a poor guarantee for the exact ob-

servance of the eighth commandment, would be hardly prudent or worth our while. After several fruitless trials they desist from their request. Another, who is troubled by some bodily infirmity, for which all the united faculties of London and Paris might prescribe in vain, a withered hand, for instance, or stone-blind of an eye, asks for medicine, which no sooner applied shall, in his expectation, suddenly restore him to perfect health and corporal integrity. But I had been already forewarned that to doctor a Bedouin, even under the most favourable circumstances, or a camel, is pretty much the same thing, and with about an equal chance of success or advantage. I politely decline. He insists; I turn him off with a joke.

"So you laugh at us, O you inhabitants of towns. We are Bedouins, we do not know your customs," replies he, in a whining tone; while the boys grin unconscionably at the discomfiture of their tribesman.

"Ya woleyd," or "young fellow" (for so they style every human male from eight to eighty without distinction), "will you not fill my pipe?" says one, who has observed that mine was not idle, and who, though well provided with a good stock of dry tobacco tied up in a rag at his greasy waist-belt, thinks the moment a fair opportunity for a little begging, since neither medicine nor merchandize is to be had.

But Salim, seated amid the circle, makes me a sign not to comply. Accordingly I evade the demand. However, my petitioner goes on begging, and is imitated by two or three others, each of whom thrusts forward, (a true Irish hint,) a bit of marrow-bone with a hole drilled in one side to act for a pipe, or a porous stone, not uncommon throughout the desert, clumsily fashioned into a smoking apparatus, a sort of primitive meerschäum.

As they grow rude, I pretend to become angry, thus to cut the matter short. "We are your guests, O you Bedouins; are you not ashamed to beg of us?" "Never mind, excuse us; those are ignorant fellows, ill-bred clowns, &c.," interposes one close by the chief's side; and whose dress is in somewhat better condition than that of the other half and three-quarter naked individuals who complete the assembly.

"Will you not people the pipe for your little brother?" subjoins the chief himself, producing an empty one with a



modest air. Bedouin language, like that of most Orientals, abounds with not ungraceful imagery, and accordingly "people" here means "fill." Salim gives me a wink of compliance; I take out a handful of tobacco, and put it on his long shirt-sleeve, which he knots over it, and looks uncommonly well pleased. At any rate they are easily satisfied, these Bedouins.

In such conversation, and more of like tenor, the hour wears away. Some get up and depart, others take their places, all have their observations or enquiries to make; and we have full opportunity of studying their character, propensities, and customs; the more so as, because, not guessing who we really are, they are off their guard.

But the chieftet, after getting his supply of tobacco, the main object of his visit, were truth to be told, has retired to his tent, there to give suitable orders for the coming entertainment. Shortly after we see a knot of idle individuals gathered together a little in the background; this indicates the spot where a sheep or camel, according to circumstances, is being slaughtered for the evening's feast. A little after we see its carcase stretched out near the corner of the tent, to be cut up by several operators amid a crowd of spectators deeply interested in the process, for the whole encampment is to share in the banquet prepared on occasion of the guests.

We are now left awhile alone, for cooking is too important an affair to permit the absence of any unoccupied neighbours. In Europe too many cooks are said to have an injurious effect upon the broth, but here the process is far too simple for spoiling. To light a fire under a huge never-scoured cauldron, to set the water boiling, and then to throw in the quarters of the slaughtered animal to seethe in their own unskimmed grease, till about two-thirds cooked; that is the whole culinary art and the *ne plus ultra* of a Bedouin feast.

All this, however, takes some time; fires lighted in the open air do not act so quickly as they would in a stove and kitchen, and large masses of meat cannot be speedily reduced to something like an edible condition. Accordingly the stars are already in the sky, and the night breeze has cooled the sands, before an unusual bustle among the bystanders and a burst of sparks show that the cauldron has been at last removed off the stones which served it for fire-place. The water is then poured off,

the meat piled pell-mell into a large and very dirty wooden bowl, and thus, without any other accompaniment, seasoning, or aught else, placed on the ground about half-way between us and the tents.

The chief, or some unbreeched youngster of his family, comes up to us with the customary "Tefaddaloo," or "do us the favour," that is, of accepting the invitation. We approach the bowl, but ere we can take our place a rush has already been made from all quarters towards the common centre of attraction, and a large circle is awaiting in silence the signal to begin. This is given by the chief, who again repeats the formula of welcome, and Salim and my comrade (for I confess myself to have been always rather backward on these occasions, not for want of hunger, but of liking,) fish out a large joint of half-raw meat, and pulling at it in opposite directions, divide it into more manageable morsels. Then every one falls to. Thirty or more unwashed hands are in the bowl, and within five minutes' space, bones too clean picked to offer much solace to the lean dogs on guard around are all that remains of the banquet.

"Why do you not eat? eat; go to work at it; O, a hundred welcomes to you, our worthy guests," reiterates at short intervals our host, and shows the way by his own good example. I may remark, that were the sultan himself in our place, he would get no greater variety or choicer fare, for the simple reason that the Sherarat have nothing better to present.

Water, with a strong ammoniacal flavour, acquired from the over-proximity of camels to the wells whence it has been drawn, is now passed round to whoever desires drink in a sort of small pail, which might in England find its appropriate place at a colt's muzzle. However, while we partake of its contents, our next-hand neighbour will not fail to say "Hena'," or "good health," by way of a compliment, and a hint too to pass him the bowl.

We then retire to our sand slope and baggage; for to sleep within the host's tent is not customary in genuine Bedouin life. The smallness of the habitation where a family of all sexes and ages are crowded together, and its non-partition into separate chambers, fully explains and justifies this precautionary usage, which has nothing to do with want of hospitality.

The night air in these wilds is life and health itself. We

sleep soundly, unharassed by the anticipation of an early summons to march next morning, for both men and beasts have alike need of a full day's repose. When the sun has risen we are invited to enter the chief's tent and to bring our baggage under its shelter. A main object of our entertainer's, in proposing this move, is to try whether he cannot render our visit some way profitable to himself, by present or purchase. Whatever politeness he can muster is accordingly brought into play, and a large bowl of fresh camel's milk, an excellent beverage, now appears on the stage. I leave to chemical analysts to decide why this milk will not furnish butter, for such is the fact, and content myself with bearing witness to its very nutritious and agreeable qualities.

We then, at the earnest request of the chief, his wife, sisters, and cousins, and for their sole and private inspection, open a corner of our sacks, and after much haggling sell a piece of cloth, a head-dress, or some similar object. The difficulty lies in the paying; for not only our friend is by no means over-ready to part with his cash, but he is moreover quite ignorant respecting the specific value of its component pieces. Accordingly a council of the wisest heads in the tribe has to be called to decide on the value of each separate coin, and, after that, to sum-totalize, which is, for Bedouins, a yet more Herculean effort of intellect, and the account must be cast up item by item full a dozen times before he knows whether he had twenty or thirty piastres in his dirty hand.

The day passes on. About noon our host naturally enough supposes us hungry, and accordingly a new dish is brought in; it looks much like a bowl full of coarse red paste, or bran mixed with ochre. This is Samḥ, a main article of subsistence to the Bedouins of Northern Arabia. Throughout this part of the desert grows a small herbaceous and tufted plant, with juicy stalks and a little ovate yellow-tinted leaf; the flowers are of a brighter yellow, with many stamens and pistils. When the blossoms fall off, there remains in place of each a four-leaved capsule about the size of an ordinary pea, and this, when ripe, opens to show a mass of minute reddish seeds, resembling grit in feel and appearance, but farinaceous in substance. The ripening season is in July, when old and young, men and women, all are out to collect the unsown and untoiled-for harvest. The

capsules are gathered, the seed separated from them, and kept like a stock of flour for the ensuing year. These seeds, when wanted for use, are coarsely ground in a hand mill, then mixed with water, and boiled into the substance which we now had before us. Its taste and quality were pretty well hit off by Salim, who described it, "not so good as wheat, and rather better than barley-meal."

Another gift of nature is the Meṣa'a, a fruit well known to Bedouins, though neglected by all else. Its shrub attains two or three feet in height, woody and tangled, with small and pointed leaves of a lively green, and a little red star-like flower. This in June gives place to a berry much resembling in size, colour, and taste our own red currant, though inferior to it in flavour, while its sweetness predominates too much over its acidity. The Bedouins collect and greedily devour it, or, boiling it down with a little water, procure a sort of molasses, much esteemed by them, but by them alone. This, with the Samḥ just mentioned, camel's milk, and an occasional repast of butcher's meat, though that is a rare luxury, forms all their list of eatables.

No one throughout the entire Sherarat tribe can boast a coffee-pot or coffee. Such articles are indeed common among the Syro-Arab Bedouins, enriched by the possession of sheep and horses and the neighbourhood of towns, not to mention frequent acquisitions of plunder from peasants or travellers. But here, in Arabia Proper, sheep are the almost exclusive property of townsmen and villagers, and they are strong enough to keep their own, while vigorous governments have for years pressed on the Bedouins with a rod of iron, and reduced them to their normal condition, that of mere camel-drivers, and nothing more. But if they are somewhat the losers under such a system, the land is much a gainer; and I think most of my readers will easily admit that wealth and security for peasants and merchants may well outweigh the advantages of nomade licence and the insolent lawlessness of the clans of the Syrian desert—only desert because in the possession of Bedouins.

The military strength of this tribe, as may be gathered from what I have already said concerning them, is small, too scattered for collective action, and too poor to provide themselves



with effective arms. What weapons they have consist of clumsy matchlocks and rusty spears.

Their feuds are continual, but at little cost of life ; the main object of a raid is booty, not slaughter ; and the Bedouin, though a terrible braggart, has at heart little inclination for killing or being killed. They will relate for hours together raw-head and bloody-bones stories of their wars and combats with this or that tribe, and give in a gazette worthy of Waterloo, till when you come to examine coolly into the number of the victims, thus dashingly designated by "thousands," your humanity will be consoled by finding them reduced to the more moderate numbers of "two" or "three," and even these you must not set down at once for dead, as they were probably only "slightly wounded," and will reappear alive and well in next day's report.

One cause of this great sparing of human life is the absence of those national and religious principles which so often in other countries, and even more in Asia than in Europe, urge on men to bloodshed. The Bedouin does not fight for his home, he has none ; nor for his country, that is anywhere ; nor for his honour, he never heard of it ; nor for his religion, he owns and cares for none. His only object in war is the temporary occupation of some bit of miserable pasture-land or the use of a brackish well ; perhaps the desire to get such a one's horse or camel into his own possession—all objects which imply little animosity, and, if not attained in the campaign, can easily be made up for in other ways, nor entail the bitterness and cruelty that attend or follow civil and religious strife.

Further on, indeed, in Central Arabia, there exist tribes of much greater wealth, strength, and organization ; such are the Shomer, south of Djowf, the Meṭeyr and 'Oṭeybah in the midlands, the Ajman and Benoo-Khalid to the east. But all these taken together are very few in number when compared to the fixed population, a sixth or seventh at best, judging from the muster-rolls of the different Arab provinces, and only appear in war time under the character of auxiliaries to the one or other faction among the townsmen, not as independent or hostile troops. The Wahnābee government has, blow after blow, "broken their thorn," to use a significant Arab phrase ; and



though all are not equally poor or barbarous in their customs with the Sherarat, they are even more submissive to the ruling power, nor dare stir save at its bidding.

A day's rest put us in condition to resume our way next morning amid shrubs and sand-hills down the valley that winds between its stony banks like a broad shallow river to the south. We fell in with many Bedouins of course, and passed several large encampments, sometimes halting in them for a meal, and sometimes not, besides some occasional sale of trifling value to keep up our mercantile character. No particular adventure here occurred worth recording, though our journey was far from dull, thanks to much amusement in laughing, now with, now at, our companions or hosts. They on their side entertained us with long stories of wandering life and adventures of stray or stolen camels, of swaggering war heroes, and lovers full as adventurous as any Romeo but somewhat less delicate; of divorces without the Act, and alliances in which the turning point and main object seemed to be the supper of boiled mutton, that *ne plus ultra* of Bedouin cookery and desire.

"What will you do on coming into God's presence for judgment after so graceless a life?" said I one day to a spirited young Sherarat, whose long matted lovelocks, and some pretension to dandihood, for the desert has its dandies too, amid all his ragged accoutrements, accorded very well with his conversation, which was nowise of the most edifying description. "What will we do?" was his unhesitating answer, "why, we will go up to God and salute him, and if he proves hospitable (gives us meat and tobacco), we will stay with him; if otherwise, we will mount our horses and ride off." This is a fair specimen of Bedouin ideas touching another world, and were I not afraid of an indictment for profaneness, I might relate fifty similar anecdotes at least.

On the 27th of the month we passed with some difficulty a series of abrupt sand-hills that close in the direct course of Wadi Sirhan. Here, for the first time, we saw the Ghada, a shrub almost characteristic, from its very frequency, of the Arabian Peninsula, and often alluded to by its poets. It is of the genus *Euphorbia*, with a woody stem, often five or six feet in height, and innumerable round green twigs, very slender and flexible, forming a large feathery tuft, not ungraceful to the eye,

while it affords some kind of shelter to the traveller and food to his camels. These last are passionately fond of Ghada, and will continually turn right out of their way, in spite of blows and kicks, to crop a mouthful of it, and then swing back their long necks into the former direction, ready to repeat the same manoeuvre at the next bush as though they had never received a beating for their past voracity.

I have, while in England, heard and read more than once of the "docile camel." If "docile" means stupid, well and good; in such a case the camel is the very model of docility. But if the epithet is intended to designate an animal that takes an interest in its rider so far as a beast can, that in some way understands his intentions or shares them in a subordinate fashion, that obeys from a sort of submissive or half fellow-feeling with his master, like the horse and elephant, then I say that the camel is by no means docile, very much the contrary; he takes no heed of his rider, pays no attention whether he be on his back or not, walks straight on when once set a going, merely because he is too stupid to turn aside; and then, should some tempting thorn or green branch allure him out of the path, continues to walk on in this new direction simply because he is too dull to turn back into the right road. His only care is to cross as much pasture as he conveniently can while pacing mechanically onwards; and for effecting this his long flexible neck sets him at great advantage, and a hard blow or a downright kick alone has any influence on him whether to direct or impel. He will never attempt to throw you off his back, such a trick being far beyond his limited comprehension; but if you fall off, he will never dream of stopping for you, and walks on just the same, grazing while he goes, without knowing or caring an atom what has become of you. If turned loose, it is a thousand to one that he will never find his way back to his accustomed home or pasture, and the first comer who picks him up will have no particular shyness to get over; Jack or Tom are all the same to him, and the loss of his old master and of his own kith and kin gives him no regret and occasions no endeavour to find them again. One only symptom will he give that he is aware of his rider, and that is when the latter is about to mount him, for on such an occasion, instead of addressing him in the style of Balaam's more intelligent beast, "Am not I thy camel

upon which thou hast ridden ever since I was thine, unto this day?" he will bend back his long snaky neck towards his master, open his enormous jaws to bite if he dared, and roar out a tremendous sort of groan, as if to complain of some entirely new and unparalleled injustice about to be done him. In a word, he is from first to last an undomesticated and savage animal, rendered serviceable by stupidity alone, without much skill on his master's part or any co-operation on his own, save that of an extreme passiveness. Neither attachment nor even habit impress him ; never tame, though not wide awake enough to be exactly wild.

One passion alone he possesses, namely revenge, of which he furnishes many a hideous example, while in carrying it out he shows an unexpected degree of far-thoughted malice, united meanwhile with all the cold stupidity of his usual character. One instance of this I well remember ; it occurred hard by a small town in the plain of Ba'albec, where I was at the time residing. A lad of about fourteen had conducted a large camel, laden with wood, from that very village to another at half an hour's distance or so. As the animal loitered or turned out of the way, its conductor struck it repeatedly, and harder than it seems to have thought he had a right to do. But not finding the occasion favourable for taking immediate quits, it " bode its time ;" nor was that time long in coming. A few days later the same lad had to reconduct the beast, but unladen, to his own village. When they were about half-way on the road, and at some distance from any habitation, the camel suddenly stopped, looked deliberately round in every direction to assure itself that no one was within sight, and, finding the road far and near clear of passers-by, made a step forward, seized the unlucky boy's head in its monstrous mouth, and lifting him up in the air flung him down again on the earth with the upper part of his skull completely torn off, and his brains scattered on the ground. Having thus satisfied its revenge, the brute quietly resumed its pace towards the village as though nothing were the matter, till some men who had observed the whole, though unfortunately at too great a distance to be able to afford timely help, came up and killed it. But let us now drive our camels past the Ghaḍa bushes, where riders and ridden have been alike diverging, and resume our onward way.

After passing the sand-hills lately mentioned, we left the direct line of the valley, and entered on a new scene. The country was still open and desert, but much modified in aspect from the black uplands that had preceded Wadi Sirhan. The plain, though strewn with gravel, was of a yellowish hue, nor was its surface so absolutely and hopelessly barren; while on the left a long range of abrupt hills, the Djebal-el-Djowf, or "mountains of Djowf," extended far into the distance. Our course lay in a kind of groove, a side embranchment of Sirhan, and leading almost due south. A little after noon we came upon a large hollow, where, amid two hundred Sherarat tents at the least, (myself and my companion counted them till we grew tired,) lay the waters of Magooa', a collection of deep and perennial wells, whose water would not be altogether bad, were dirt and camels kept a little further from the rim.

Here we were obliged to pass the rest of that day and the following also. For Salim, who could not enter the Djowf along with us in person, on account of a murder there committed by him at a previous date, was here compelled to stop and look out for us a companion capable of conducting us safe within the limits of that territory, and who once there might receive from us a written attestation of our having duly reached our journey's end. This paper, duly signed and sealed, was to be delivered to Salim, who without it could not receive his stipulated hire, which at the outset of the journey had been deposited in the hands of a worthy town-magistrate of Ma'ān, Ibraheem by name. From him our Howeytat guide was to receive his guerdon on presenting, by way of letter of credit, the document just alluded to, in which we were to declare that we had arrived in due form and comfort at our journey's end, without having had any subject of complaint or dissatisfaction with our escort.

After much search and many proffers canvassed and rejected, Salim ended by finding a good-natured but somewhat timid individual, Suleyman-el-'Azzamee, who undertook our guidance to the Djowf. Meanwhile the Bedouins, desirous to secure from us a favourable report of their conduct on our coming before the governor of that district, treated us fairly well; meat and milk, dates and samh, came before us in succession, and we passed our day not uncomfortably on the whole,



chatting in the tents, or strolling about the sand-hills round the hollow, in spite of the overpowering heat, enough to have made a Bengalee complain, and a Madrassee pronounce it utterly intolerable.

Early on the 29th of the month we were again on our way. Before us lay an upland and barren tract, opening out to the north. Here we sighted a large troop of ostriches; no bird on earth is more timid or more difficult of approach. When we saw them far ahead running in a long line one after the other as though their very lives depended on it, we almost took them for a string of scared camels. The Sherarat hunt them, as their plumage is eagerly bought up on the frontiers to be resold in Egypt or Syria, whence it often passes on to Europe.

No water is to be found in this steppe. We journeyed on all the long summer day, and only halted for an hour at sunset to prepare a cinder-seasoned meal; then remounted, and passed close under the south-eastern spur of Djebal-el-Djowf, till after midnight a short halt afforded us a little rest and sleep.

Mine was, however, somewhat disturbed by a scorpion bite: not so serious an accident, indeed, as it sounds, considering the genus of the aggressor, but painful enough, though soon passing off. These desert scorpions are curious little creatures, about a fourth of an inch in length, and, apparently, all claws and tail, of a deep reddish brown colour, and very active. They abound throughout the sandy soil. In the daytime they wisely keep out of the way, but at night come out to take the cooler air. Their sting is exactly like the smart of a white-hot iron point firmly pressed on the skin, and when I felt my forehead thus assaulted, I jumped up exceedingly quick, anticipating twenty-four hours of suffering, the usual period allotted, at least in popular credence, to the duration of scorpion torture; but I was agreeably disappointed, for the pain did not last above an hour, was accompanied by little swelling, and then went entirely off, hardly leaving any perceptible mark.

We remounted by the light of the morning star, anxious to enter the Djowf before the intense heat of noon should come on; but we had yet a long way to go, and our track followed endless windings among low hills and stony ledges, without any symptom of approach to cultivated regions. At last the slopes grew greener, and a small knot of houses with traces of



tillage close by appeared. It was the little village of Djoon, the most westerly appendage of Djowf itself. I counted between twenty and thirty houses. We next entered a long and narrow pass, whose precipitous banks shut in the view on either side. Suddenly several horsemen appeared on the opposite cliff; and one of them, a handsome youth, with long curling hair, well armed and well mounted (we shall make his more special acquaintance in the next chapter), called out to our guide to halt, and answer in his own behalf and ours. This Suleyman did, not without those marks of timidity in his voice and gesture which a Bedouin seldom fails to show on his approach to a town, for when once in it he is apt to sneak about much like a dog who has just received a beating for theft. On his answer, delivered in a most submissive tone, the horsemen held a brief consultation, and we then saw two of them turn their horses' heads, and gallop off in the direction of the Djowf, while our original interlocutor called out to Suleyman, "All right, go on, and fear nothing," and then disappeared after the rest of the band behind the verge of the upland.

We had yet to drag on for an hour of tedious march; my camel fairly broke down, and fell again and again; his bad example was followed by the coffee-laden beast; the heat was terrible in these gorges, and noon was approaching. At last we cleared the pass, but found the onward prospect still shut out by an intervening mass of rocks. The water in our skins was spent, and we had eaten nothing that morning. When shall we get in sight of the Djowf? or has it flown away from before us? While thus wearily labouring on our way, we turned a huge pile of crags, and a new and beautiful scene burst upon our view.

But that view, and what followed on this our first transition from desert to inhabited Arabia, deserves a separate chapter.

## CHAPTER II

## THE DJOWF

Thus far into the bowels of the land  
Have we marched on without impediment.

*Shakespeare*

*View of Djowf from the North—Meeting of Ghāfil and Dāfee—Ghāfil's House; the K'hāwah—Formalities of Society—Coffee making—Dates—General Description of the Djowf—Its Houses, War-Towers, Gardens, and Palm-groves—Climate—Population—Other Villages—Character of the Inhabitants—Commerce and Progress—Our New Lodgings—Daily Life—A Djowf Supper—Accusation brought against us—Visit to the Castle—Its Architecture—Tower of Marid—Hamood; his K'hāwah, his Shomer Rannue—Administration of Justice—Mosque—Society in Djowf—Arrival of the 'Azzam Deputation; we agree to accompany them to Hā'yel—Our New Guide—Departure from Djowf—Route Southwards—Be'er Shekeek.*

A BROAD deep valley, descending ledge after ledge till its innermost depths are hidden from sight amid far-reaching shelves of reddish rock, below everywhere studded with tufts of palm-groves and clustering fruit-trees in dark green patches down to the furthest end of its windings; a large brown mass of irregular masonry crowning a central hill; beyond a tall and solitary tower overlooking the opposite bank of the hollow, and further down small round turrets and flat house-tops half buried amid the garden foliage, the whole plunged in a perpendicular flood of light and heat; such was the first aspect of the Djowf as we now approached it from the west. It was a lovely scene, and seemed yet more so to our eyes weary of the long desolation through which we had with hardly an exception journeyed day after day since our last farewell glimpse of Gaza and Palestine up to the first entrance on inhabited Arabia. "Like the Paradise of eternity, none can enter it till after having previously

passed over hell-bridge," says an Arab poet, describing some similar locality in Algerian lands.

Reanimated by the view, we pushed on our jaded beasts, and were already descending the first craggy slope of the valley, when two horsemen, well dressed and fully armed after the fashion of these parts, came up toward us from the town, and at once saluted us with a loud and hearty "Marhaba," or "welcome;" and without further preface they added, "alight and eat," giving themselves the example of the former by descending briskly from their light-limbed horses, and untying a large leather bag full of excellent dates, and a water-skin, filled from the running spring; then spreading out these most opportune refreshments on the rock, and adding, "we were sure that you must be hungry and thirsty, so we have come ready provided," they invited us once more to sit down and begin.

Hungry and thirsty we indeed were; the dates were those of Djowf, the choicest in their kind to be met with in northern Arabia, the water was freshly drawn, cool and clear, no slight recommendations after the ammoniacal wells of Magooa' and Oweysit, so that altogether we thought it unnecessary to make our new friends repeat their invitation, and without delay set ourselves to enjoy the present good, leaving the future with all its cares to Providence and the course of events. Meanwhile I took the occasion of studying more minutely the outward man of our benefactors.

The elder of the cavaliers was a man apparently of about forty years of age, tall, well-made, dark-complexioned, and with a look that inspired some mistrust, while it denoted some intelligence and more habitual haughtiness. He was handsomely dressed for an Arab, wearing a red cloth vest with large hanging sleeves over his long white shirt, with a silk handkerchief, striped red and yellow, on his head, and a silver-hilted sword at his side. In short, all about him denoted a person of a certain wealth and importance. This was Ghâfil-el-Haboob, the chief of the most important and the most turbulent family of the Djowf, Beyt-Haboob, who were not long since the rulers of the town, but are now, like all the rest of their countrymen, humble subjects to Hamood, vicegerent of Telâl, the prince of Djebel Shomer.

His companion, Dāfee by name, seemed younger in years

and slenderer of make; he was less richly dressed, though carrying, like Ghāfil, the silver-hilted sword common in Arabia to all men of good birth and circumstances; his family name was also Haboob, but his features bespoke a much milder and opener character than that of the chief, his cousin at the fourth or fifth remove.

After taking our meal, we remained awhile where we were in question and answer. Having been previously informed that the governor Hamood resided in the town itself, we suggested to Ghāfil whether it might not be suitable for us to pay that important personage the compliment of a first visit at our very entrance. But the chief had several reasons, which my readers will afterwards learn, for not desiring our so doing. Accordingly he answered that we were his personal guests, and that he himself had in consequence the right to our first reception; that as for Hamood, we should visit him a little later, and in his own company; that it would be time enough for such ceremonies after a day or two, and that in the meanwhile he was himself a sufficient guarantee of the governor's good will.

But on this Dāfee put in his claim to be our host, saying that his house was the nearer at hand; that he also had come in person to meet us; and that in consequence he had as good a right as Ghāfil to have us for his guests. However, he was in his turn obliged to yield to the superior authority of his kinsman. We then all rode on slowly together, and when we were on the point of reaching the lower level of the valley, and had already begun to enter amid the deep shadows of the palm-groves, Dāfee tendered his apologies for letting us thus pass by his abode without partaking its hospitality; and having added an invitation for the nearest day, he turned aside between the high garden walls. But on parting he gave a look of much meaning, first at Ghāfil, and then at us, the import of which we did not as yet fully understand.

Meanwhile we passed on in the company of our new host, who continued all the way his welcomes and protestations of readiness to render us every imaginable service, and leaving a little on our right the castle hill and tower, threaded between grove after grove, and garden after garden, till a high gateway gave us admittance to a cluster of houses around an open space, where seats of beaten earth and stone bordering the walls here



and there formed a sort of Arab antechamber or waiting-room for visitors not yet received within the interior precincts, and thus bespoke the importance of the neighbouring house, and consequently of its owner.

Here Ghāfil halted before a portal high enough to admit a camel and rider, and, while we modestly dismounted to await further orders, entered alone the dwelling to see if all had been duly got ready for our reception, and then quickly returned, and invited us to follow him indoors.

We traversed a second entrance, and now found ourselves in a small courtyard, three sides of which were formed by different apartments; the fourth consisted of a stable for horses and camels. In front rose a high wall, with several small windows pierced in it (no glass, of course, in this warm climate) close under the roof, and one large door in the centre. This belonged to the *Ḳ'hāwah*, or *G'hāwah*, as they here call it, that is, the coffee-room, or reception-room, if you will; inasmuch as ladies never honour its precincts, I cannot suitably dignify it with the title of drawing-room. The description of one such apartment may suffice, with little variation, for all the *Ḳ'hāwahs* of Arabia; it is an indispensable feature in every decent house throughout the Peninsula from end to end, and offers everywhere very little variation, save that of larger or smaller, better or worse furnished, according to the circumstances of its owner. For this reason I shall now permit myself some minuteness of detail in Ghāfil's mansion; it may stand sample for thousands of others.

The *Ḳ'hāwah* was a large oblong hall, about twenty feet in height, fifty in length, and sixteen, or thereabouts, in breadth; the walls were coloured in a rudely decorative manner with brown and white wash, and sunk here and there into small triangular recesses, destined to the reception of books, though of these Ghāfil at least had no over-abundance, lamps, and other such like objects. The roof of timber, and flat; the floor was strewn with fine clean sand, and garnished all round alongside of the walls with long strips of carpet, upon which cushions, covered with faded silk, were disposed at suitable intervals. In poorer houses felt rugs usually take the place of carpets. In one corner, namely, that furthest removed from the door, stood a small fireplace, or, to speak more exactly,



furnace, formed of a large square block of granite, or some other hard stone, about twenty inches each way; this is hollowed inwardly into a deep funnel, open above, and communicating below with a small horizontal tube or pipe-hole, through which the air passes, bellows-driven, to the lighted charcoal piled up on a grating about half-way inside the cone. In this manner the fuel is soon brought to a white heat, and the water in the coffee-pot placed upon the funnel's mouth is readily brought to boil. The system of coffee furnaces is universal in Djowf and Djebel Shomer, but in Nejed itself, and indeed in whatever other yet more distant regions of Arabia I visited to the south and east, the furnace is replaced by an open fireplace hollowed in the ground floor, with a raised stone border, and dog-irons for the fuel, and so forth, like what may be yet seen in Spain. This diversity of arrangement, so far as Arabia is concerned, is due to the greater abundance of fire-wood in the south, whereby the inhabitants are enabled to light up on a larger scale; whereas throughout the Djowf and Djebel Shomer wood is very scarce, and the only fuel at hand is bad charcoal, often brought from a considerable distance, and carefully husbanded.

This corner of the *Ḳ'hāwah* is also the place of distinction, whence honour and coffee radiate by progressive degrees round the apartment, and hereabouts accordingly sits the master of the house himself, or the guests whom he more especially delighteth to honour.

On the broad edge of the furnace or fireplace, as the case may be, stands an ostentatious range of copper coffee-pots, varying in size and form. Here in the Djowf their make resembles that in vogue at Damascus; but in Nejed and the eastern districts they are of a different and much more ornamental fashioning, very tall and slender, with several ornamental circles and mouldings in elegant relief, besides boasting long beak-shaped spouts and high steeples for covers. The number of these utensils is often extravagantly great. I have seen a dozen at a time in a row by one fireside, though coffee-making requires, in fact, only three at most. Here in the Djowf five or six are considered to be the thing; for the south this number must be doubled; all this to indicate the riches and munificence of their owner, by implying the frequency of his guests and the

large amount of coffee that he is in consequence obliged to have made for them.

Behind this stove sits, at least in wealthy houses, a black slave, whose name is generally a diminutive, in token of familiarity or affection; in the present case it was Soweylim, the diminutive of Sālim. His occupation is to make and pour out the coffee; where there is no slave in the family, the master of the premises himself, or perhaps one of his sons, performs that hospitable duty; rather a tedious one, as we shall soon see.

We enter. On passing the threshold it is proper to say, "Bismillah," *i.e.*, "in the name of God;" not to do so would be looked on as a bad augury alike for him who enters and for those within. The visitor next advances in silence, till on coming about half-way across the room, he gives to all present, but looking specially at the master of the house, the customary "Es-salamu'aleykum," or "Peace be with you," literally, "on you." All this while every one else in the room has kept his place, motionless, and without saying a word. But on receiving the salaam of etiquette, the master of the house rises, and if a strict Wahnābee, or at any rate desirous of seeming such, replies with the full-length traditionary formula, "W' 'aleykumu-salāmu, w'rahmat' Ullāhi w'barakātuh," which is, as every one knows, "And with (or, on) you be peace, and the mercy of God, and his blessings." But should he happen to be of anti-Wahnābee tendencies, the odds are that he will say "Marhaba," or "Ahlan w' sahan," *i.e.*, "welcome," or "worthy, and pleasurable," or the like; for of such phrases there is an infinite, but elegant variety. All present follow the example thus given, by rising and saluting. The guest then goes up to the master of the house, who has also made a step or two forwards, and places his open hand in the palm of his host's, but without grasping or shaking, which would hardly pass for decorous, and at the same time each repeats once more his greeting, followed by the set phrases of polite enquiry, "How are you?" "How goes the world with you?" and so forth, all in a tone of great interest, and to be gone over three or four times, till one or other has the discretion to say "El hamdu l'illāh," "Praise be to God," or, in equivalent value, "all right," and this is a signal for a seasonable diversion to the ceremonious interrogatory.

The guest then, after a little contest of courtesy, takes his seat in the honoured post by the fireplace, after an apologetical salutation to the black slave on the one side, and to his nearest neighbour on the other. The best cushions and newest-looking carpets have been of course prepared for his honoured weight. Shoes or sandals, for in truth the latter alone are used in Arabia, are slipped off on the sand just before reaching the carpet, and there they remain on the floor close by. But the riding stick or wand, the inseparable companion of every true Arab, whether Bedouin or townsman, rich or poor, gentle or simple, is to be retained in the hand, and will serve for playing with during the pauses of conversation, like the fan of our great-grandmothers in their days of conquest.

Without delay Soweylim begins his preparations for coffee. These open by about five minutes of blowing with the bellows and arranging the charcoal till a sufficient heat has been produced. Next he places the largest of the coffee-pots, a huge machine, and about two-thirds full of clear water, close by the edge of the glowing coal-pit, that its contents may become gradually warm while other operations are in progress. He then takes a dirty knotted rag out of a niche in the wall close by, and having untied it, empties out of it three or four handfuls of unroasted coffee, the which he places on a little trencher of platted grass, and picks carefully out any blackened grains, or other non-homologous substances, commonly to be found intermixed with the berries when purchased in gross; then, after much cleansing and shaking, he pours the grain so cleansed into a large open iron ladle, and places it over the mouth of the funnel, at the same time blowing the bellows and stirring the grains gently round and round till they crackle, redden, and smoke a little, but carefully withdrawing them from the heat long before they turn black or charred, after the erroneous fashion of Turkey and Europe; after which he puts them to cool a moment on the grass platter. He then sets the warm water in the large coffee-pot over the fire aperture, that it may be ready boiling at the right moment, and draws in close between his own trouserless legs a large stone mortar, with a narrow pit in the middle, just enough to admit the black stone pestle of a foot long and an inch and half thick, which he now takes in hand. Next, pouring the half-roasted berries into the mortar, he proceeds to

pound them, striking right into the narrow hollow with wonderful dexterity, nor ever missing his blow till the beans are smashed, but not reduced into powder. He then scoops them out, now reduced to a sort of coarse reddish grit, very unlike the fine charcoal dust which passes in some countries for coffee, and out of which every particle of real aroma has long since been burnt or ground. After all these operations, each performed with as intense a seriousness and deliberate nicety as if the welfare of the entire Djowf depended on it, he takes a smaller coffee-pot in hand, fills it more than half with hot water from the larger vessel, and then shaking the pounded coffee into it, sets it on the fire to boil, occasionally stirring it with a small stick as the water rises to check the ebullition and prevent overflowing. Nor is the boiling stage to be long or vehement ; on the contrary, it is and should be as light as possible. In the interim he takes out of another rag-knot a few aromatic seeds called *hey*l, an Indian product, but of whose scientific name I regret to be wholly ignorant, or a little saffron, and after slightly pounding these ingredients, throws them into the simmering coffee to improve its flavour, for such an additional spicing is held indispensable in Arabia, though often omitted elsewhere in the East. Sugar would be a totally unheard-of profanation. Last of all, he strains off the liquor through some fibres of the inner palm-bark placed for that purpose in the jug-spout, and gets ready the tray of delicate parti-coloured grass, and the small coffee cups ready for pouring out. All these preliminaries have taken up a good half-hour.

Meantime we have become engaged in active conversation with our host and his friends. But our Sherarat guide, Suleyman, like a true Bedouin, feels too awkward when among townsfolk to venture on the upper places, though repeatedly invited, and accordingly has squatted down on the sand near the entrance. Many of Ghāfil's relations are present ; their silver-decorated swords proclaim the importance of the family. Others, too, have come to receive us, for our arrival, announced beforehand by those we had met at the entrance pass, is a sort of event in the town ; the dress of some betokens poverty, others are better clad, but all have a very polite and decorous manner. Many a question is asked about our native land and town, that is to say, Syria and Damascus, conformably to the disguise



already adopted, and which it was highly important to keep well up; then follow enquiries regarding our journey, our business, what we have brought with us, about our medicines, our goods and wares, &c. &c. From the very first it is easy for us to perceive that patients and purchasers are likely to abound. Very few travelling merchants, if any, visit the Djowf at this time of year, for one must be mad, or next door to it, to rush into the vast desert around during the heats of June and July; I for one have certainly no intention of doing it again. Hence we had small danger of competitors, and found the market almost at our absolute disposal.

But before a quarter of an hour has passed, and while blacky is still roasting or pounding his coffee, a tall thin lad, Ghāfil's eldest son, appears, charged with a large circular dish, grass-platted like the rest, and throws it with a graceful jerk on the sandy floor close before us. He then produces a large wooden bowl full of dates, bearing in the midst of the heap a cup full of melted butter; all this he places on the circular mat, and says, "Semmo," literally, "pronounce the Name," of God, understood; this means, "set to work at it." Hereon the master of the house quits his place by the fireside and seats himself on the sand opposite to us; we draw nearer to the dish, and four or five others, after some respectful coyness, join the circle. Every one then picks out a date or two from the juicy half-amalgamated mass, dips them into the butter, and thus goes on eating till he has had enough, when he rises and washes his hands.

By this time the coffee is ready, and Soweylim begins his round, the coffee-pot in one hand, the tray and cups on the other. The first pouring out he must in etiquette drink himself, by way of a practical assurance that there is no "death in the pot;" the guests are next served, beginning with those next the honourable fire-side; the master of the house receives his cup last of all. To refuse would be a positive and unpardonable insult; but one has not much to swallow at a time, for the coffee-cups, or finjans, are about the size of a large egg-shell at most, and are never more than half-filled. This is considered essential to good breeding, and a brimmer would here imply exactly the reverse of what it does in Europe; why it should be so I hardly know, unless perhaps the rareness



of cup-stands or "zarfs" (see Lane's "Modern Egyptians") in Arabia, though these implements are universal in Egypt and Syria, might render an over-full cup inconveniently hot for the fingers that must grasp it without medium. Be that as it may, "fill the cup for your enemy" is an adage common to all, Bedouins or townsmen, throughout the Peninsula. The beverage itself is singularly aromatic and refreshing, a real tonic, and very different from the black mud sucked by the Levantine, or the watery roast-bean preparations of France. When the slave or freeman, according to circumstances, presents you with a cup, he never fails to accompany it with a "Semm'," "say the name of God," nor must you take it without answering "bismillah."

When all have been thus served, a second round is poured out, but in inverse order, for the host this time drinks first, and the guests last. On special occasions, a first reception, for instance, the ruddy liquor is a third time handed round; nay, a fourth cup is sometimes added. But all these put together do not come up to one-fourth of what a European imbibes in a single draught at breakfast.

Ghāfil would have greatly wished us to set up shop and medicine in his own house, nor without reason, for his domestic stock of coffee was almost at an end, and he trusted, under cover of hospitality, to drive an advantageous bargain with us for that which we had brought. But on our part, my comrade and myself were very desirous of finding means for being sometimes alone together; we had much to talk over and consult about, and that of a nature not always exactly fitted for our friend's hearing; besides, I had my journal to write up, and for this and such like matters we had not as yet enjoyed a moment free from prying observation from the moment of our leaving Ma'an on the 16th up to this the 30th of June. Nor could we, while remaining as mere guests under another man's roof, obtain the independent position so desirable for rightly studying the land and its inhabitants. We therefore declined the chief's repeated proffer, and insisted, under various decent pretexts, on the necessity of a separate lodging-place.

With this Ghāfil was at last obliged to comply, and promised us that we should next day be installed in a convenient and central dwelling. The rest of the afternoon was devoted to

repose, and it was near sunset when our host invited us to visit his gardens in the cool of the evening. I will take the opportunity of leading my readers over the whole of the Djowf, as a general view will help better to understand what follows in the narrative, besides offering much that will be in part new, I should fancy, to the greater number.

This province is a sort of oasis, a large oval depression of sixty or seventy miles long, by ten or twelve broad, lying between the northern desert that separates it from Syria and Euphrates, and the southern Nefood, or sandy waste, and interposed between it and the nearest mountains of the central Arabian plateau, where it first rises at Djebel Shomer. However, from its comparative proximity to the latter, no less than from the character of its climate and productions, it belongs hardly so much to Northern as to Central Arabia, of which it is a kind of porch or vestibule. If an equilateral triangle were to be drawn, having its base from Damascus to Bagdad, the vertex would find itself pretty exactly at the Djowf, which is thus at a nearly equal distance, south-east and south-west, from the two localities just mentioned, while the same cross-lines, if continued, will give at about the same intervals of space in the opposite direction, Medinah on the one hand, and Zulphah, the great commercial door of Eastern Nejed, on the other. Djebel Shomer lies almost due south, and much nearer than any other of the places above specified. Partly to this central position, and partly to its own excavated form, the province owes its appropriate name of Djowf, or "belly." The "Gut," so familiar to Oxford men, is a case of analogous, and not more courtly nomenclature.

The principal, or rather the only town of the district, all the rest being mere hamlets, bears the name of the entire region. It is composed of eight villages, once distinct, but which have in process of time coalesced into one, and exchanged their separate existence and name for that of Sook, or "quarter," of the common borough. Of these Sooks the principal is that belonging to the family Haboob, and in which we were now lodged. It includes the central castle already mentioned, and numbers about four hundred houses. The other quarters, some larger, others smaller, stretch up and down the valley, but are connected together by their extensive gardens. The entire length of the town thus formed, with the cultivation immediately annexed, is full four

miles, but the average breadth does not exceed half a mile, and sometimes falls short of it.

The size of the domiciles varies with the condition of their occupants, and the poor are contented with narrow lodgings, though always separate; for I doubt if throughout the whole of Arabia two families, however needy, inhabit the same dwelling. Ghāfil's abode, already described, may give a fair idea of the better kind; in such we have an outer court, for unlading camels and the like, an inner court, a large reception room, and several other smaller apartments, to which entrance is given by a private door, and where the family itself is lodged.

But another and a very characteristic feature of domestic architecture is the frequent addition, throughout the Djowf, of a round tower, from thirty to forty feet in height and twelve or more in breadth, with a narrow entrance and loopholes above. This construction is sometimes contiguous to the dwelling place, and sometimes isolated in a neighbouring garden belonging to the same master. These towers once answered exactly the same purposes as the "torri," well known to travelers in many cities of Italy, at Bologna, Sienna, Rome, and elsewhere, and denoted a somewhat analogous state of society to what formerly prevailed there. Hither, in time of the ever-recurring feuds between rival chiefs and factions, the leaders and their partisans used to retire for refuge and defence, and hence they would make their sallies to burn and destroy. These towers, like all the modern edifices of the Djowf, are of unbaked bricks; their great thickness and solidity of make, along with the extreme tenacity of the soil, joined to a very dry climate, renders the material a rival almost of stonework in strength and endurance. Indeed, the dismantled walls, when left to themselves without roof or repair, will, and this I have often witnessed, defy all the vicissitudes of winter rains and spring gales for an entire century, nor even then give much token of their age. Since the final occupation of this region by the forces of Ṭelāl, all these towers have, without exception, been rendered unfit for defence, and some are even half ruined. Here again the phenomena of Europe have repeated themselves in Arabia.

The houses are not unfrequently isolated each from the other by their gardens and plantation; and this is especially the case with the dwellings of chiefs and their families. What has just

been said about the towers renders the reasons of this isolation sufficiently obvious. But the dwellings of the commoner sort are generally clustered together, though without symmetry or method. Equally irregular in form are the spaces of which every Sook is possessed for the communal meetings of its inhabitants, and which no more resemble, in mathematical correctness of outline, Grosvenor or Cavendish Square, than the rows of houses do Regent or Oxford Street.

The gardens of the Djowf are much celebrated in this part of the East, and justly so. They are of a productiveness and variety superior to those of Djebel Shomer or of Upper Nejed, and far beyond whatever the Hedjaz and its neighbourhood can offer. Here, for the first time in our southward course, we found the date-palm a main object of cultivation; and if its produce be inferior to that of the same tree in Nejed and Hasa, it is far, very far, above whatever Egypt, Africa, or the valley of the Tigris from Bagdad to Basra can show. However, the palm is by no means alone here. The apricot and the peach, the fig-tree and the vine, abound throughout these orchards, and their fruit surpasses in copiousness and flavour that supplied by the gardens of Damascus or the hills of Syria and Palestine. In the intervals between the trees or in the fields beyond, corn, leguminous plants, gourds, melons, &c. &c., are widely cultivated. Here, too, for the last time, the traveller bound for the interior sees the irrigation indispensable to all growth and tillage in this droughty climate kept up by running streams of clear water, whereas in the Nejed and its neighbourhood it has to be laboriously procured from wells and cisterns.

The ripening season of the different kinds of fruit or harvest is, of course, earlier here than in Syria, not to say Europe. Djowf apricots are in full maturity by the end of May, and the vintage falls in July; peaches delay till August, dates till August and September. Further south, in Nejed, for instance, all these periods are respectively anticipated by about a month, and in 'Omān by two months at least. Much did I regret in these places my inability to have with me either thermometer or any similar instrument for ascertaining the niceties of the temperature and atmosphere; but such kind of baggage would have been too inconsistent in Arab eyes with my assumed character, too European, in short; besides that, what between jolting



camels and roughly-packed saddle-bags, a long glass tube would have run but an indifferent chance of preserving its integrity, even so far as the Djowf. But some rough estimate of the average temperature may be gathered from what I have just said of the fruit-ripening periods in these regions and from other analogous circumstances ; and were we to place the general standard of the Djowf thermometer in the shade at noon during the months of June, July, and August at about 90° or 95° Fahr., we should not, I think, be far wrong for this valley. At night the air is, with very few exceptions, cool, at least comparatively, so that a variation of twenty or more degrees often occurs within a very short period.

The gardens just described are everywhere enclosed by high walls of unbaked brick, and are intersected by a labyrinth of little watercourses passing from tree to tree and from furrow to furrow. Among all their different kinds of produce one only is considered as a regular article of sale and export—the date ; and from this the inhabitants derive a tolerable revenue, not, indeed, by traffic within the limits of the Djowf itself, where every one is supplied from his own trees, but from the price received in exchange at Tabook or Hā'yel, Damascus and Bagdad, for even so far is this fruit carried. It is almost incredible how large a part the date plays in Arab sustenance ; it is the bread of the land, the staff of life, and the staple of commerce. Mahomet, who owed his wonderful success at least as much to his intense nationality as to any other cause, whether natural or supernatural, is said to have addressed his followers on the subject in these words : “Honour the date-tree, for she is your mother ;” a slight extension of the fifth commandment, though hardly, perhaps, exceeding the legislative powers of a prophet. Yet, with all due deference for authority and experience, I cannot exactly agree with him in thinking this leafy mother fully entitled to so unreserved a commendation. The date is too luscious a food not to weary at last, and is, besides, when dried, too heating to be healthy when devoured in the enormous quantities which are here taken.

The Djowf, being a mere collection of houses and gardens intermingled as it were at random, is naturally unwallled ; the number and bravery of its inhabitants suffice to guard them against Bedouin incursions, nor had they any other enemy to

dread for many years, till in the last century Wahhābee despotism, and at a yet later period the growing power of Djebel Shomer and its chief, successively assailed and absorbed them.

Besides the Djowf itself, or capital, there exist several other villages belonging to the same homonymous province, and all subject to the same central governor. Of these the largest is Sekākah; it lies at about twelve miles distant to the north-east, and though inferior to the principal town in importance and fertility of soil, almost equals it in the number of its inhabitants. I should reckon the united populations of these two localities—men, women, and children—at about thirty-three or thirty-four thousand souls. This calculation, like many others before us in the course of the work, rests partly on an approximate survey of the number of dwellings, partly on the military muster, and partly on what I heard on the subject from the natives themselves. A census is here unknown, and no register records birth, marriage, or death. Yet, by aid of the war list, which generally represents about one-tenth of the entire population, a fair though not an absolute, idea may be obtained on this point.

Lastly, around and at no great distance from these main centres are several small villages or hamlets, eight or ten in number, as I was told, and containing each of them from twenty to fifty or sixty houses. But I had neither time nor opportunity to visit each separately. They cluster round lesser water springs, and offer in miniature features much resembling those of the capital. The entire population of the province cannot exceed forty or forty-two thousand, but it is a brave one, and very liberally provided with the physical endowments of which it has been acutely said that they are seldom despised save by those who do not themselves possess them. Tall, well-proportioned, of a tolerably fair complexion, set off by long curling locks of jet-black hair, with features for the most part regular and intelligent, and a dignified carriage, the Djowfites are eminently good specimens of what may be called the pure northern or Ismaelitish Arab type, and in all these respects they yield the palm to the inhabitants of Djebel Shomer alone. Their large-developed forms and open countenance contrast strongly with the somewhat dwarfish stature and suspicious under-glance of the Bedouin. They are, besides, a very healthy people, and

keep up their strength and activity even to an advanced age. It is no uncommon occurrence here to see an old man of seventy set out full-armed among a band of youths ; though, by the way, such "green old age" is often to be met with also in the central provinces further south, as I have had frequent opportunity of witnessing. The climate, too, is good and dry, and habits of out-door life contribute not a little to the maintenance of health and vigour.

In manners, as in locality, the worthies of Djowf occupy a sort of half-way position between Bedouins and the inhabitants of the cultivated districts. Thus they partake largely in the nomade's aversion to mechanical occupations, in his indifference to literary acquirements, in his aimless fickleness too, and even in his treacherous ways. And though in general much superior in politeness and in self-respect to the Sherarat and their fellows, they are equally far from displaying the dignified and even polished courtesy usual in Shomer and Nejed, much less that of Ḥaṣa and 'Omān. On the other hand, in cleanliness of person and habitation, in agricultural skill, in reasoning powers, in a sort of local patriotism, in capacity for treating with strangers and conducting commerce, and even in an occasional desire of instruction and progress, they come nearer to the remaining townsmen and villagers of the Peninsula. They were, in fact, originally, to judge by the annals of Ṭā'ī, their ancestral tribe, a fairly civilized race after the old Arab fashion, and have still a positive tendency to become so once more, though long held back by the untoward circumstances of war and faction, besides the deteriorating influence of the savage tribes amongst whom they are in a way isolated by their geographical situation. The following incident, in which we ourselves had nearly played a very prominent, though by no means an equally agreeable part, may serve for a tolerable illustration of their actual state between these conflicting tendencies.

I have said in the preceding chapter, that while we were yet threading the narrow gorge near the first entrance of the valley, several horsemen appeared on the upper margin of the pass, and one of them questioned our guide, and then, after a short consultation with his companions, called out to us to go on and fear nothing. Now the name of this individual was Sulman-ebn-Ḍāhir, a very adventurous and fairly intelligent young

fellow, with whom next-door neighbourhood and frequent intercourse rendered us intimate during our stay at the Djowf. One day, while we were engaged in friendly conversation, he said, half laughing, "Do you know what we were consulting about while you were in the pass below on the morning of your arrival? It was whether we should make you a good reception, and thus procure ourselves the advantage of having you residents amongst us, or whether we should not do better to kill you all three, and take our gain from the booty to be found in your baggage." I replied with equal coolness, "It might have proved an awkward affair for yourself and your friends, since Hamood your governor could hardly have failed to get wind of the matter, and would have taken it out of you." "Pooh!" replied our friend, "never a bit; as if a present out of the plunder would not have tied Hamood's tongue." "Bedouins that you are," said I, laughing. "Of course we are," answered Sulman, "for such we all were till quite lately, and the present system is too recent to have much changed us." However, he admitted that they all had, on second thoughts, congratulated themselves on not having preferred bloodshed to hospitality, though perhaps the better resolution was rather owing to interested than to moral motives.

The most distinctive good feature of the inhabitants of Djowf is their liberality. Nowhere else, even in Arabia, is the guest, so at least he be not murdered before admittance, better treated, or more cordially invited to become in every way one of themselves. Courage, too, no one denies them, and they are equally lavish of their own lives and property as of their neighbours'. Their central position, already explained, is favourable to commerce, though the long distances which must be traversed to or from their valley limits this commerce, with few exceptions, to certain fixed seasons of the year, namely, the cooler months of winter and spring. Yet they have not hitherto learnt to appreciate the advantages of establishing a regular market-place for their wares, nor does a single shop exist even in the capital. Buying and selling are carried on in the private dwelling-places themselves, and the workshop of the artisan is also his domicile. This system has been established and is still maintained in favour of the monopoly thus thrown into the hands of the local chief in the respective quarters of the town, but it seems likely



to be abandoned for a better, at least if the present rule be maintained for some years to come.

Let us now resume the narrative. On the morning after our arrival—it was now the 1st of July—Ghāfil caused a small house in the neighbourhood, belonging to one of his dependants, to be put at our entire disposal, according to our previous request. This our new abode consisted of a small court, with two rooms, one on each side, for warehouse and habitation, the whole being surrounded with an outer wall, whose door was closed by lock and bolt. Of a kitchen-room there was small need, so constant and hospitable are the invitations of the good folks here to strangers; and if our house was not over spacious, it afforded at least what we most desired, namely, seclusion and privacy at will; it was, moreover, at our host's cost, rent and reparations.

Hither accordingly we transferred baggage and chattels, and arranged everything as comfortably as we best could. And as we had already concluded from the style and conversation of those around us, that their state of society was hardly far enough advanced to offer a sufficiently good prospect for medical art, whose exercise to be generally advantageous requires a certain amount of culture and aptitude in the patient, no less than of skill in the physician, we resolved to make commerce our main affair here, trusting that by so doing we should gain a second advantage, that of lightening our more bulky goods, such as coffee and cloth, whose transport had already annoyed us not a little.

But in fact we were not more desirous to sell than the men, women, and children of the Djowf were to buy. From the very outset our little courtyard was crowded with customers, and the most amusing scenes of Arab haggling, in all its mixed shrewdness and simplicity, diverted us through the week. Handkerchief after handkerchief, yard after yard of cloth, beads for the women, knives, combs, looking-glasses, and what not? (for our stock was a thorough miscellany), were soon sold off, some for ready money, others on credit; and it is but justice to say that all debts so contracted were soon paid in very honestly; Oxford High Street tradesmen, at least in former times, were not always equally fortunate.

Meanwhile we had the very best opportunity of becoming acquainted with and appreciating all classes, nay, almost all

individuals of the place. Peasants too from various hamlets arrived, led by rumour, whose trumpet, prone to exaggerate under every sky, had proclaimed us throughout the valley of Djowf for much more important characters and possessed of a much larger stock in hand than was really the case. All crowded in, and before long there were more customers than wares assembled in the store-room.

Ghāfil, for his part, employed a hundred petty artifices to prevent our selling the coffee, which he vehemently desired to reserve for his own bargain. No sooner had we an offer for it, than he sent some of his relations or friends to dissuade us from coming to terms; and though we had early perceived his aim, we thought it best to wink at it, willing to gratify our first and principal host, even at the cost of some slight loss to ourselves.

I say, our principal host, for everybody who had a dinner or a supper to offer was also our host at the Djowf; invitations rained in on all sides, and it would have been considered a shame on the hospitality of the people in general, and a blot on their fair name, had we ever been left to dine twice under the same roof. Our manner of passing the time was as follows. We used to rise at early dawn, lock up the house, and go out in the pure cool air of the morning to some quiet spot among the neighbouring palm-groves, or scale the wall of some garden, or pass right on through the bye-lanes to where cultivation merges in the adjoining sands of the valley; in short, to any convenient place where we might hope to pass an hour of quiet undisturbed by Arab sociability, and have leisure to plan our work for the day. We would then return home about sunrise, and find outside the door some tall lad sent by his father, generally one of the wealthier and more influential inhabitants of the quarter, yet unvisited by us, waiting our return, to invite us to an early breakfast. We would now accompany our Mercury to his domicile, where a hearty reception, and some neighbours collected for the occasion, or attracted by a cup of good coffee, were sure to be in attendance. Here an hour or so would wear away, and some medical or mercantile transaction be sketched out. We of course would bring the conversation, whenever it was possible, on local topics, according as those present seemed likely to afford us exacter knowledge and insight into the real state and circumstances of the land. We would then return to

our own quarters, where a crowd of customers awaiting us, would allow us neither rest nor pause till noon. Then a short interval for date or pumpkin eating in some neighbour's house would occur, and after that business be again resumed for three or four hours. A walk among the gardens, rarely alone, more often in company with friends and acquaintances, would follow; and meanwhile an invitation to supper somewhere had unfailingly been given and accepted.

This important meal is here, as almost everywhere else in Arab towns, a little before sunset. The staple article of Djowf fare, and in Djebel Shomer also, is Djereeshah, that is, wheat coarsely ground, and then boiled; butter and meat are added, sometimes vegetables, gourds, cucumbers, and the like; eggs, hard-boiled by the way, occasionally come in; but however various the items, the whole is piled up heapwise on one large copper dish, of circular form, and often a foot and a half or even two feet in diameter. The food itself is served scalding hot, but is to be eaten with the hand alone; not that any philosophical or moral objection exists to forks and spoons, as I have seen ingeniously stated by an author—French, I believe—but simply that those articles are not to be had here, nor are they indeed any way requisite where soup and joints of roast meat are alike out of the question. Bread never figures at a Djowf supper, though it is common enough at breakfast. This article assumes in Arabia infinite varieties of form and quality; here it consists of large unleavened cakes of a moderate thickness. Dates are often added to represent garnish at supper; from what meal indeed are they absent? No drink but water is known hereabouts, though date-tree wine might easily be manufactured, and the old poets and writers of Northern Arabia often mention it; but it has now gone out of fashion, and even remembrance.

After supper all rise, wash their hands, and then go out into the open air to sit and smoke a quiet pipe under the still transparent sky of the summer evening. Neither mist nor vapour, much less a cloud, appears; the moon dips down in silvery whiteness to the very verge of the palm-tree tops, and the last rays of daylight are almost as sharp and clear as the dawn itself. Chat and society continue for an hour or two, and then every one goes home, most to sleep, I fancy, for few Penseroso lamps are here to be seen at midnight hour, nor does the spirit of Plato stand

much risk of unsphering from the nocturnal 'studies of the Djowf; we, to write our journal, or to compare observations and estimate characters.

Sometimes a comfortable landed proprietor would invite us to pass an extemporary holiday morning in his garden, or rather orchard, there to eat grapes and enjoy ourselves at will, seated under clustering vine-trellises, with palm-trees above and running streams around. How pleasant it was after the desert ! At other times visits of patients, prescriptions, and similar duties would take up a part of the day; or some young fellow, particularly desirous of information about Syria or Egypt, or perhaps curious after history and moral science, would hold us for a couple of hours in serious and sensible talk, at any rate to our advantage.

Let us now pay our official visit to Ḥamood. To this Ghāfil, after delaying as long as he decently could, at last consented on the fourth day after our arrival. We accordingly set out from his house all together, in great state and gravity, accompanied by a bevy of Ḥaboob kinsmen, and wound for a full quarter of an hour through narrow garden alleys, overshadowed by palms and moist with flowing waters, till we emerged on a large open space just at the rise of the castle mound. On one side, but at some distance, rose the solitary round tower of "Mārid," or "the Rebellious," whose massive stone walls are more than once mentioned in Arab poetry. But its architecture offers no trace of Greek or Roman skill; it is clearly the work of Arab labour and on an Arab plan, and being such presents but little to the study of the artist or the archæologist. However, the actual tenants of the soil, themselves incapable of similar constructions, gaze on it with an admiration in which a European can hardly share.

Below us where we now stood on the uprising ground of the citadel lay the ruined dwellings of the chiefs of Ḥaboob, slaughtered or exiled; and all around them the stumps of palm-trees cut down or burnt, and the traces of now unwatered gardens bear witness to the late war. Above in front of us rises the castle itself, now the residence of Ḥamood. It is a large irregular mass of rough masonry, patched up and added to again and again, till its original rectangular form has almost disappeared. Indeed, the southerly side is the only one that



has preserved its first line of construction tolerably unbroken, and here the huge size and exact squaring of the stones in the lower tiers indicates the early date of the fabric, while several small windows, at a height of about ten or twelve feet from the ground, are topped by what, if I remember right, is called the Cyclopean arch—a specimen of which may yet be seen in the so-called Palace of Atreus at Mycenæ—that most primitive of constructions, in which two flat stones are placed slantways against each other. Near the centre of the castle stands a square tower, very broad for its height, which hardly exceeds fifty feet, while the sides have each a breadth of twenty, or thereabouts. It seems to belong to a later period than the southern wall, and has narrow loopholes for defence. A large semicircular curtain, coming round from this keep to a corner of the outer enclosure, is evidently of yet more recent fabrication, being built roughly and unsystematically with rubble and coarse blocks, whereas in the stonework of the tower some attempt at regularity has been kept up. The entrance gate, placed at the southern angle of this motley pile, seems coeval with the main tower rather than with the older remains; it is arched, and in this differs from the style used in Nejed, where doors and roofs alike are always flat; a projecting parapet crowns it above, and its approach is somewhat guarded by the flanking walls, between which it retreats a little. Within, the castle courts and galleries are paved with large irregular flags, well fitted together, much like what we see in some streets of Florence; and the passages that lead to the interior are long, dark, and vaulted. Here on one of the lateral walls I noticed two deeply-cut crosses, certainly of ancient date, and such as not unfrequently occur amid the ruins of Hauran in Syria; they bear witness to the prevalence of the Christian religion here in a former age.

The entrances, at the moment of our arrival, were almost filled up by the attendants of Ḥamood, all armed with swords or guns, and tolerably well dressed, but without any distinctive badge or livery. We passed through the midst of them, receiving the stares of the idle and the salutations of the polite, till we reached a second inner court, close under the keep just described, and there Ḥamood was seated in his K'hāwah, or reception room, a large and gloomy apartment, with high raised seats of stone against the two sides farthest from the fireplace;

this last was placed, as usual, in the corner farthest from the entrance.

There, in the place of distinction, which he never yields to any individual of Djowf, whatever be his birth or wealth, appeared the governor, a strong, broad-shouldered, dark-browed, dark-eyed man, clad in the long white shirt of the country, and over it a handsome black cloak, embroidered with crimson silk; on his august head a silken handkerchief or *Keffee'yeh*, girt by a white band of finely woven camel's hair; and in his fingers a grass fan. He rose graciously on our approach, extended to us the palm of his hand, and made us sit down near his side, keeping, however, Ghāfil, as an old acquaintance, between himself and us, perhaps as a precautionary arrangement against any sudden assault or treasonable intention on our part, for an Arab, be he who he may, is never off his guard when new faces are in presence. In other respects he showed us much courtesy and good will, made many civil enquiries about our health after so fatiguing a journey, praised Damascus and the Damascenes, by way of an indirect compliment, and offered us a lodging in the castle. But here Ghāfil availed himself of the privileges conceded by Arab custom to priority of hostship to put in his negative on our behalf; nor were we anxious to press the matter. A pound or so of our choicest coffee, with which we on this occasion presented his excellency, both as a mute witness to the object of our journey, and the better to secure his good will, was accepted very readily by the great man, who in due return offered us his best services. We replied that we stood in need of nothing save his long life, this being the Arab formula for rejoinder to such fair speeches; and, next in order, of means to get safe on to Hā'yel so soon as our business at the Djowf should permit, being desirous to establish ourselves under the immediate patronage of Telāl. In this he promised to aid us, and he kept his word.

Of course coffee was served and dates eaten. Meanwhile the three men of Shomer, whom I have mentioned as Hamood's council or check-weight, after keeping silence awhile where they sat on the raised stone platform opposite to the governor, now entered into familiar conversation. They were all three well-looking middle-aged individuals, wearing the light cotton handkerchief spotted with red or blue, which is almost peculiar to

Djebel Shomer, and everything in their personal appearance bespoke a degree of culture and intelligence placing them considerably above the inhabitants of the Djowf, and even above Ḥamood himself, who, although prudent and skilful enough in his affairs, is yet half a Bedouin in manners, and thereby all the better suited to the people he rules. With much ease and off-handedness they drew us into talk, showed great interest in our well-doing, and united in encouraging us to lose no time in making our way to Ḥā'yel, where they assured us of an excellent welcome from Ṭelāl. This was the first time that we heard the genuine Arabic of the interior spoken, and we were both of us much struck by its extreme purity and grace, accompanied by an extreme elegance of enunciation; it is in fact the language of the Coran, neither more nor less, with all its niceties, inflections, and desinences, not one is lost or slurred over. Our ears were further charmed by the desire they manifested to witness some display of medical skill, and by the promise that our art would be duly appreciated and earnestly sought after in Djebel Shomer, while Ṭelāl himself was by their account a sort of Augustus and Mæcenas in one, and not a whit less superior to Ḥamood than the town of Ḥā'yel to the semi-Bedouin village where we now were.

Close by these lords of the privy council sat the Meṭowwaa', or minister—clergyman, if you will, (the literal meaning of the Arabic word is, "one who enforces obedience," to God, understood,)—an old sour-faced gentleman sent hither to teach the men of Djowf their catechism, and little liked either by his scholars or his companions; a circumstance nowise tending to improve his habitually bad temper.

During the eighteen days which went by in the Djowf, Ḥamood, with all his council, very politely returned our visit; and we on our part made frequent excursions to the castle, and more than once partook of its hospitality, or passed a spare hour in studying the various and interesting scenes it presented. For Ḥamood, in virtue of his judicial and executive powers, held every morning, and some afternoons also, long audiences in behalf of whoever had grievances to redress or claims to advance; the contending parties would on such occasions come to plead their cause in person before him in the K'hāwah; and the governor himself, after a patient hearing, would pronounce



sentence. I ought to say that cases of life and death, along with all permanent legislative acts, are reserved for the head jurisdiction of Ḥā'yel; whatever falls short of these is left to the vicegerent, who has accordingly plenty of work to go through, the more so that it has almost all to be done personally. A lawyer would have but an indifferent chance of livelihood in Arabia, where every one, the very Bedouins included, has eloquence and presence of mind enough to defend his own cause; and the chicane of courts would be of little purpose in such an assembly, though bribery is not always absent nor unsuccessful. I was much amused by the simplicity and straightforwardness of all parties in these tribunals; a court-martial is complicated in comparison. But when the plaintiff or defendant chances to be a Bedouin, we have a thorough comedy; the following, for instance.

One day my comrade and myself were on a visit of mere politeness at the castle, the customary ceremonies had been gone through, and business, at first interrupted by our entrance, had resumed its course. A Bedouin of the Ma'āz tribe was pleading his cause before Ḥamood, and accusing some one of having forcibly taken away his camel. The governor was seated with an air of intense gravity in his corner, half leaning on a cushion, while the Bedouin, cross-legged on the ground before him, and within six feet of his person, flourished in his hand a large reaping-hook, identically that which is here used for cutting grass. Energetically gesticulating with this graceful implement, he thus challenged his judge's attention. "You, Ḥamood, do you hear?" (stretching out at the same time the hook towards the governor, so as almost to reach his body, as though he meant to rip him open); "he has taken from me my camel; have you called God to mind?" (again putting his weapon close to the unflinching magistrate); "the camel is my camel; do you hear?" (with another reminder from the reaping-hook); "he is mine, by God's award and yours too; do you hear, child?" and so on, while Ḥamood sat without moving a muscle of face or limb, imperturbable and impassible, till some one of the counsellors quieted the plaintiff, with "Remember God, child; it is of no consequence, you shall not be wronged." Then the judge called on the witnesses, men of the Djowf, to say their say, and on their confirmation of the Bedouin's state-



ment, gave orders to two of his satellites to search for and bring before him the accused party ; while he added to the Ma'ázee, "All right, daddy, you shall have your own ; put your confidence in God," and composedly motioned him back to his place.

Within the castle limits is enclosed the spacious Mesjid, or Mosque, constructed by order of 'Obeyd when on his first visit to the Djowf. But though large, it is a very simple and unadorned construction, being nothing more than a sort of portico, fourteen columns in length by three in depth ; and since the space from pillar to pillar is about twelve feet, the entire edifice may be a hundred and eighty long, and nearly forty broad. The supports are of wood, the walls of earth, and the roof of flat rafters. In this meeting-place the stated Friday prayers are read, and the Khoṭbah or stereotyped sermon pronounced ; all who can attend ought to do so ; but Ḥamood takes little pains to enforce such regularity ; and in absence of positive constraint, the orthodox injunctions to attendance have too feeble an echo in Djowf hearts to bring about even a tolerable assembly. The sultan's name, 'Abd-el-'Azeez Khan, is mentioned in the Khoṭbah, and that is all his Ottoman Majesty gets of subjection from the Djowf, or indeed throughout the dominions of Ṭelāl. Farther south, the "Lord of the two continents and of the two seas," is denied even the empty honour of name or recognition.

A fortnight and more went by, and found us still in the Djowf, "honoured guests" in Arab phrase, and well rested from the bye-gone fatigues of the desert. Ghāfil's dwelling was still, so to speak, our official home ; but there were two other houses where we were still more at our ease ; that of Dāfee, the same who along with Ghāfil came to meet us on our first arrival ; and that of Sālim, a respectable, and, in his way, a literary old man, our near neighbour, and surrounded by a large family of fine strapping youths, all of them brought up more or less in the fear of Allah and in good example. Hither we used to retire when wearied of Ghāfil and his like, and pass a quiet hour in their K'hāwah, reciting or hearing Arab poetry, talking over the condition of the country and its future prospects, discussing points of morality, or commenting on the ways and fashions of the day. In either of these houses we were always

sure of finding a hearty welcome and a reluctant farewell ; and when afterwards far off in Ḥā'yel we continued to receive messages from Dāfee and Sālim to beg the realization of our ambiguous and indefinite promises of a future return.

However, in very truth, all, or almost all, were our friends at heart, and really meant us well, with a hearty desire to see us established among them. Proffers of partnership in business, nay, of marriage alliance, were not uncommon, and we had to defend ourselves not less strenuously than Ulysses against the charms of more than one half-unveiled Calypso. Even Ghāfil was, to a certain extent, sincere ; and it is a general feature in the Arab character, that the heartiest friendship and the most profuse generosity are nowise incompatible with a hard bargain or taking an advantage in affairs, of which this worthy's conduct was an excellent illustration.

But now came another question ; how were we to get on to Djebel Shomer ? Between it and us lay the formidable sand-passes, called the Neṣood, where Arab travellers, however bold, are in no hurry to adventure at any season of the year, and to pass which in the latter half of July might be reckoned almost as difficult an exploit, though for a somewhat contrary reason, as to sail through Behring's Straits in the month of January. In fact, from May to September few and far between are those who commit their beasts or themselves to the hazards of these burning sands. So that to all our enquiries on this subject, "wait till the dates be ripe" was the only answer, and these same dates were not to ripen till the rise of Soheyl, or Canopus, here coincident with the first week of September, and the beginning of the new year in popular computation.

"What to do ?" as I once heard a Frenchman say, thus translating his "quoi faire ?" a thought too literally into English. We did not well know, only we were terribly annoyed at the prospect of so long a delay, when there occurred a favourable and unlooked-for opportunity of accomplishing our wishes.

Telāl, soon after taking possession of the Djowf, had begun to use that province as a basis for extending his power thence over the whole of the surrounding desert and its indwellers, up to the Pilgrim road on the west and Syria on the north. The intervening space is, as we have already seen, occupied chiefly

by the Sherarat Bedouins, against whom Ṭelāl directed an open attack, terminated the very year of our visit, 1862, by the submission of the 'Azzām, the last independent branch of the tribe. Just at this nick of time about a dozen chiefs of that clan arrived at the Djowf, on their way to Djebel Shomer, where they purposed to win Ṭelāl's good graces by tendering him their allegiance in his very capital. Ḥamood received them, and lodged them for several days, while they rested from their past fatigues, and prepared themselves for what yet lay before them. Some inhabitants of the Djowf, whose business required their presence at Ḥā'yel, were to join the party. Ḥamood sent for us, and gave us notice of this expedition, and on our declaring that we desired to profit by it, he handed us a scrap of paper, addressed to Ṭelāl himself, wherein he certified that we had duly paid the entrance fee exacted from strangers on their coming within the limits of Shomer rule, and that we were indeed respectable individuals, worthy of all good treatment. Now, as the toll thus levied on the frontiers amounts to only four shillings or somewhat less per individual, one cannot say that it is too much to pay in quittance of all custom-house duties or passport fees soever. Nor is anything else required or expected. We then, in presence of Ḥamood, struck our bargain with one of the band for a couple of camels, whose price, including all the services of their master as guide and companion for ten days of July travelling, was not extravagant either; it came up to just a hundred and ten piastres, equivalent to eighteen or nineteen shillings of English money.

We now laid in provisions for the way in dates and flour, repaired our water-skins, recovered what arrears of debt yet remained in our favour, and awaited the moment for starting; while our Djowf friends did their best to dissuade us from such a journey at such a season. As we could not of course explain to them our precise reasons for so ill-timed an adventure, our obstinacy in rejecting their well-meant advice seemed almost incomprehensible; till they ended by setting it down to our being "Sho'wam" or Damascenes; the inhabitants of Syria in general, and those of the capital yet more specially, being famous for headiness and the spirit of contradiction.

Many delays occurred, and it was not till the 18th of July,

when the figs were fully ripe—a circumstance which furnished the natives of Djowf with new cause of wonder at our rushing away, in lieu of waiting like rational beings to enjoy the good things of the land—that we received our final “Son of Hodeirah, depart.” This was intimated to us, not by a locust, but by a creature almost as queer, namely, our new conductor, a half-cracked Arab, neither peasant nor Bedouin, but something anomalous between the two, hight Djedey’, and a native of the outskirts of Djebel Shomer, who darkened our door in the forenoon, and warned us to make our final packing up and get ready for starting the same day. Near the hour called by Arabs the ‘Asr, that is, between three and four after mid-day, we took leave of our neighbours and mounted our camels, now much lighter laden than when we set out for Ma’ān, while Dāfee, ‘Oḳeyl (the eldest son of Ghāfil, for his father was just then absent from the Djowf on a hunting party), and some others of our acquaintance, accompanied us, according to Eastern custom, for a short way on the outset of our journey, heartily sorry to see us go, and with many invitations for a prompt return. “Insha’ Allah,” “if God wills,” was our reply. What better could we say?

When once clear of the houses and gardens, Djedey’ led us by a road skirting the southern side of the valley, till we arrived, before sunset, at the other or eastern extremity of the town. Here was the rendezvous agreed on by our companions; but they did not appear, and reason good, for they had right to a supper more under Ḥamood’s roof, and were loth to lose it. So we halted and alighted alone. The chief of this quarter, which is above two miles distant from the castle, invited us to supper, and thence we returned to our baggage, there to sleep. To pass a summer’s night in the open air on a soft sand-bed implies no great privation in these countries, nor is any one looked on as a hero for so doing.

Early next morning, while Venus yet shone like a drop of melted silver on the slaty blue, three of our party arrived and announced that the rest of our companions would soon come up. Encouraged by the news, we determined to march on without further tarrying, and ere sunrise we climbed the steep ascent of the southerly bank, whence we had a magnificent view of the whole length of the Djowf, its castle and towers.



and groves and gardens, in the ruddy light of morning, and beyond the drear northern deserts stretching far away. We then dipped down the other side of the bordering hill, not again to see the Djowf till—who knows when?

Our way was now to the south-east, across a large plain varied with sand-mounds and covered with the Ghada bush already described, so that our camels were much more inclined to crop pasture than to do their business in journeying ahead. About noon we halted near a large tuft of this shrub, at least ten feet high. We constructed a sort of cabin with boughs broken off the neighbouring plants and suitably arranged shed-wise, and thus passed the noon hours of intolerable heat till the whole band came in sight.

They were barbarous, nay, almost savage fellows, like most Sherarat, whether chiefs or people; but they had been somewhat awed by the grandeurs of Hamood, and yet more so by the prospect of coming so soon before the terrible majesty of Telāl himself. All were duly armed, and had put on their best suits of apparel, an equipment worthy of a scarecrow or of an Irishman at a wake. Tattered red overalls; cloaks with more patches than original substance, or, worse yet, which opened large mouths to cry for patching, but had not got it; little broken tobacco pipes, and no trowsers soever (by the way, all genuine Arabs are *sans culottes*); faces meagre with habitual hunger, and black with dirt and weather stains;—such were the high-born chiefs of 'Azzām, on their way to the king's levee. Along with them were two Bedouins of the Shomer tribe, a degree better in guise and person than the Sherarat; and lastly, three men of Djowf, who looked almost like gentlemen among such ragamuffins. As to my comrade and myself, I trust that the reader will charitably suppose us the exquisites of the party. So we rode on together.

Next morning, a little after sunrise, we arrived at a white calcareous valley, girt round with low hills of marl and sand. Here was the famous Be'er Shekeek, or "well of Shekeek," whence we were to fill our water-skins, and that thoroughly, since no other source lay before us for four days' march amid the sand passes, up to the very verge of Djebel Shomer. This well is very deep, eighty feet at least, judging by the length of cord let down into it before reaching water; it is about three

feet in breadth at its orifice, though widening out cistern-like below. Around it is a raised stone parapet, and the interior also is coated with masonry.

Here our Arabs set to work, and shouting, laughing, and pulling, drew up bucket after bucket, till they filled the skins to bursting. Noon has now passed, and there is no time to lose ; indeed, the stock of water laid in will barely suffice its allotted period, especially in such a heat as this. So we all mount our camels, who have been wisely for once employed in storing a good provision of moisture in their complicated stomachs, and pursue our way. In less than half an hour we have cleared the chalky hollow, and enter at once on the Nefood. But here, travellers and readers, let us pause for a moment before encountering the severest fatigue of the whole journey.

## CHAPTER III

## THE NEFOOD AND DJEBEL SHOMER

Per correr miglior acqua alza le vele  
 Omai la navicella del mio ingegno,  
 Che lascia dietro a se mar sì crudele.—*Dante*

*Nefood—General Idea of the Desert—Description of the Nefood—Conduct of the Bedouins in our Party—'Aalam-es-Sa'ad—News of 'Oneyzah—Distant View of Djebel Djobbah—Band of Shomer Horsemen—Djobbah, its Neighbourhood—The Governor—'Aakil—Second Nefood—Sand Hollow and Wells—Djebel Shomer—Kenah, Lakeetah, and Woseytah—First View of Hā'yeḷ—The Palace, its Buildings and Outer Court—Attendants and People—Seyf the Chamberlain—Unexpected Recognition—Telāl's Arsenal; his K'hāwah—State Prisoners—Telāl's own Person and Retinue—First Meeting—Supper and Lodgings—'Abd-el-Mahsin, his History and Character—'Abd-Allah-ebn-Rasheed—His First Attempt and Adventures—His Enlistment under Turkee-ebn-Sa'ood at Riad—Expedition against Haṣa—'Abd-Allah and Meshāree—Foundation of the New Shomer Dynasty—Destruction of Beyt-'Alee—Reign of 'Abd-Allah—Principal Events—Wars and Conquests—He begins the New Quarter and Palace of Hā'yeḷ—Telāl Succeeds—His Conquests—Internal and External Policy—Personal Qualities and Family—Audience given to the 'Azzām Sherarat.*

DAUGHTERS of the Great Desert, to use an Arab phrase, the "Nefood," or sand passes, bear but too strong a family resemblance to their unamiable mother. What has been said elsewhere about their origin, their extent, their bearings, and their connection with the D'hana, or main sand waste of the south, may exempt me from here entering on a minute enarration of all their geographical details; let it suffice for the present that they are offshoots—inlets, one might not unsuitably call them—of the great ocean of sand that covers about one-third of the Peninsula, into whose central and comparatively fertile plateau they make deep inroads, nay, in some places almost intersect it. Their general character, of which the following pages will, I trust, give a tolerably correct idea, is also that of Dahnā, or "red desert," itself. The Arabs, always prone to localize rather than generalize, count these sand-streams by scores, but

they may all be referred to four principal courses, and he who would traverse the centre must necessarily cross two of them, perhaps even three, as we did.

The general type of Arabia is that of a central table-land, surrounded by a desert ring, sandy to the south, west, and east, and stony to the north. This outlying circle is in its turn girt by a line of mountains, low and sterile for the most, but attaining in Yemen and 'Omān considerable height, breadth, and fertility, while beyond these a narrow rim of coast is bordered by the sea. The surface of the midmost table-land equals somewhat less than one-half of the entire Peninsula, and its special demarcations are much affected, nay, often absolutely fixed, by the windings and in-runnings of the Nefood. If to these central high-lands, or Nejed, taking that word in its wider sense, we add the Djowf, the Tā'yif, Djebel 'Aaseer, Yemen, 'Omān, and Ḥasa, in short, whatever spots of fertility belong to the outer circles, we shall find that Arabia contains about two-thirds of cultivated, or at least of cultivable land, with a remaining third of irreclaimable desert, chiefly to the south. In most other directions the great blank spaces often left in maps of this country are quite as frequently indications of non-information as of real non-inhabitation. However, we have just now a strip, though fortunately only a strip, of pure unmitigated desert before us, after which better lands await us; and in this hope let us take courage with the old poet, who has kindly furnished me with a very appropriate heading to this chapter, and boldly enter the Nefood.

Much had we heard of them from Bedouins and countrymen, so that we had made up our minds to something very terrible and very impracticable. But the reality, especially in these dog-days, proved worse than aught heard or imagined.

We were now traversing an immense ocean of loose reddish sand, unlimited to the eye, and heaped up in enormous ridges running parallel to each other from north to south, undulation after undulation, each swell two or three hundred feet in average height, with slant sides and rounded crests furrowed in every direction by the capricious gales of the desert. In the depths between the traveller finds himself as it were imprisoned in a suffocating sand-pit, hemmed in by burning walls on every side; while at other times, while labouring up the slope, he overlooks what seems a vast sea of fire, swelling under a heavy monsoon



wind, and ruffled by a cross-blast into little red-hot waves. Neither shelter nor rest for eye or limb amid torrents of light and heat poured from above on an answering glare reflected below.

Tale scendeva l' eternale ardore ;  
Onde la rena s' accendea com' esca  
Sotto focile, a doppiar lo dolore.

Add to this the weariness of long summer days of toiling—I might better say wading—through the loose and scorching soil, on drooping half-stupefied beasts, with few and interrupted hours of sleep at night, and no rest by day because no shelter, little to eat and less to drink, while the tepid and discoloured water in the skins rapidly diminishes even more by evaporation than by use, and a vertical sun, such a sun, strikes blazing down till clothes, baggage, and housings all take the smell of burning, and scarce permit the touch. The boisterous gaiety of the Bedouins was soon expended, and scattered, one to front, another behind, each pursued his way in a silence only broken by the angry snarl of the camels when struck, as they often were, to improve their pace.

It was on the 20th of July, a little after noon, that we had left Be'er Shekeek. The rest of that day and almost all night we journeyed on, for here three or four hours of repose at a time, supper included, was all that could be taken, since, if we did not reach the other side of the Nefood before our store of water was exhausted, we were lost for certain. Indeed, during the last twenty-four hours of these passes, to call them by their Arab name, we had only one hour of halt. Monday, the 21st of July, wore slowly away, most slowly it seemed, in the same labour, and amid the same unvarying scene. The loose sand hardly admits of any vegetation ; even the Ghaḍa, which, like many other Euphorbias, seems hardly to require either earth or moisture for its sustenance, is here scant and miserably stunted ; none can afford either shelter or pasture. Sometimes a sort of track appears, more often none ; the moving surface has long since lost the traces of those who last crossed it.

About this time we noticed in the manner of our Sherarat companions, especially the younger ones, a certain insolent familiarity which put us much on our guard ; for it is the custom of the Bedouin, when meditating plunder or treachery, to try the ground first in this fashion, and if he sees any signs of

timidity or yielding in his intended victim, he takes it as a signal for proceeding further. The best plan in such cases is to put on a sour face and keep silence, with now and then a sharp reprimand by way of intimidation, and this often cows the savage just as a barking dog will shrink back under a steady look. Such was accordingly our conduct on the present occasion. We kept apart for hours at a time, and when alongside of the brigands, said little, and that little anything but friendly. Before long the more impudent appeared abashed or embarrassed and fell back, while an old 'Azzām chief, with a dry face like a withered crab-apple, pushed his dromedary up alongside of mine, under pretext of seeking medical advice, but in reality to make thus a proffer of friendliness and respect. Of course I met his advances with cold and sullen reserve ; and hereon he began to apologize for the "Ghushm," "ill-bred clowns" of his party, assuring us that they had, however, no bad intention ; that it was merely want of good education ; that all were our brothers, our servants, &c. &c. We received his apology with an air of dignified importance, talked big of what we could or would do—very little, I fear, had matters been brought to the test—and then condescended to friendly chat and professional information, according to what his ailments might require or his intelligence admit.

But I afterwards learned from the Shomer Bedouins and from the men of Djowf, that the worthy Sherarats, supposing us to have amassed great wealth under Ḥamood's patronage, had seriously proposed to take the opportunity of this desert solitude to pillage us, and then leave us without water or camels to find our way out of the Nefood as best we might, that is, never. This little scheme they had communicated to the Shomer, hoping for their compliance and aid. But these last, more accustomed to the restraints of neighbouring rule, were afraid of the consequences ; knowing, too, that Ṭelāl, if anyhow informed of such proceedings, might very possibly constitute himself our sole legatee, executor, and something more. Accordingly they refused to join, and the conspirators, who perceived from our manner that we already had some suspicion about their intentions, hastened to plaster matters over before we should be in a way to compromise their position at Ḥā'yel, by complaints of their meditated treachery.

Near sunset of the second day we came in sight of two lonely pyramidal peaks of dark granite, rising amid the sand-waves full in our way. "'Aalām-es-Sa'ād," the people call them, that is, "the signs of good luck," because they indicate that about one-third of the distance from Be'er-Shekeek to Djebel Shomer has been here passed. They stand out like islands, or rather like the rocks that start from the sea near the mouth of the Tagus, or like the Maldivé group in the midst of the deep Indian Ocean. Their roots must be in the rocky base over which this upper layer of sand is strewn like the sea-water over its bed; we shall afterwards meet with similar phenomena in other desert spots. Here the under stratum is evidently of granite, sometimes it is calcareous. As to the average depth of the sand, I should estimate it at about four hundred feet, but it may not unfrequently be much more; at least I have met with hollows of full six hundred feet in perpendicular descent.

On we journeyed with the 'Aalām-es-Sa'ād looming dark before us, till when near midnight, so far as I could calculate by the stars, our only timepiece (and not a bad one in these clear skies), we passed close under the huge black masses of rock. Vainly had I flattered myself with a halt, were it but of half an hour, on the occasion. "On we swept," and not till the morning star rose close beneath the Pleiades was the word given to dismount. We tumbled rather than lay down on the ground; and before sunrise were once more on our way.

Soon we reached the summit of a gigantic sand ridge. "Look there," said Djedey' to us, and pointed forwards. Far off on the extreme horizon a blue cloud-like peak appeared, and another somewhat lower at its side. "Those are the mountains of Djobbah, and the nearest limits of Djebel Shomer," said our guide. Considering how loose the water-skins now flapped at the camel's side, my first thought was, "how are we to reach them?": all the band seemed much of the same mind, for they pushed on harder than before.

Near this we fell in with a small party of roving Bedouins, from the south; and by their conversation received our first news of the war then raging in the province of Qaseem, between the Wahhābee monarch and the partisans of 'Oneyzah,—war of which we shall afterwards see and hear our fill, and of

which we shall learn also, though not till the following year and when on the very point of quitting Arabia, the disastrous conclusion.

Meanwhile with no slight difficulty we slid down the sand, descending from our elevated position, and at once lost sight, much to my regret, of the peaks of Djobbah; nor did we view them again till when close under their base, at the verge of the Nefood.

But the further we advanced the worse did the desert grow, more desolate, more hopeless in its barren waves; and at noon our band broke up into a thorough "*sauve qui peut*;" some had already exhausted their provisions, solid or liquid, and others were scarcely better furnished; every one goaded on his beast to reach the land of rest and safety. Djedey', my comrade, and myself, kept naturally together. On a sudden my attention was called to two or three sparrows, twittering under a shrub by the wayside. They were the first birds we had met with in this desert, and indicated our approach to cultivation and life. I bethought me of tales heard in childhood, at a comfortable fireside, how some far-wandering sailors, Columbus and his crew, if my memory serves me right, after days and months of dreary ocean, welcomed a bird that, borne from some yet undiscovered coast, first settled on their mast. My comrade fell a crying for very joy.

However we had yet a long course before us, and we ploughed on all that evening with scarce an hour's halt for a most scanty supper, and then all night up and down the undulating labyrinth, like men in an enchanter's circle, fated always to journey and never to advance. During the dark hours that immediately precede the dawn, we fell in with a band of some sixty horsemen, armed with matchlocks and lances; they formed part of a military expedition directed by order of *Telāl* against the insolence of some *Tey'yähha* Bedouins in the neighbourhood of *Teymah*.

The morning broke on us still toiling amid the sands. By daylight we saw our straggling companions like black specks here and there, one far ahead on a yet vigorous dromedary, another in the rear, dismounted, and urging his fallen beast to rise by plunging a knife a good inch deep into its haunches, a third lagging in the extreme distance. Every one for himself



and God for us all!—so we quickened our pace, looking anxiously before us for the hills of Djobbah, which could not now be distant. At noon we came in sight of them all at once, close on our right, wild and fantastic cliffs, rising sheer on the margin of the sand sea. We coasted them awhile, till at a turn the whole plain of Djobbah and its landscape opened on our view.

Here we had before us a cluster of black granite rocks, streaked with red, and about seven hundred feet, at a rough guess, in height; beyond them a large barren plain, partly white and encrusted with salt, partly green with tillage, and studded with palm groves, amongst which we could discern, not far off, the village of Djobbah, much resembling that of Djowf in arrangement and general appearance, only smaller, and without castle or tower. Beyond the valley glistened a second line of sand-hills, but less wild and desolate looking than those behind us, and far in the distance the main range of Djebel Shomer, a long purple sierra of most picturesque outline. Had we there and then mounted, as we afterwards did, the heights on our right, we should have also seen in the extreme south-west a green patch near the horizon, where cluster the palm plantations of Teymah, a place famed in Arab history, and by some supposed identical with the Teman of Holy Writ.

But for the moment a drop of fresh water and a shelter from the July sun was much more in our thoughts than all the Teymahs or Temans that ever existed. My camel, too, was not at the end of his wits, for he never had any, but of his legs, and hardly capable of advance, while I was myself too tired to urge him vigorously, and we took a fair hour to cross a narrow white strip of mingled salt and sand that yet intervened between us and the village.

Without its garden walls was pitched the very identical tent of our noble guide, and here his wife and family were anxiously awaiting their lord. Djedey' invited us—indeed he could not conformably with Shomer customs do less—to partake of his board and lodging, and we had no better course than to accept of both. So we let our camels fling themselves out like dead or dying alongside of the tabernacle, and entered to drink water

mixed with sour milk, and to repose in the equivocal shade afforded by a single tattered covering of black goat's hair.

As evening drew on, Djedey', after giving his camels a well-earned draught from the garden well close by, invited us to pay a visit of ceremony to the local governor 'Aakil, a native of the village itself, but invested by Ṭelāl with vicarious authority. Now our friend's real object in calling in at this hour was to ensure a good supper, a thing which his own domicile could hardly have mustered. To the great delight of my comrade, whom the wretchedness of Djedey's hovel had led to anticipate a correspondingly miserable kitchen, our guide's manœuvres, the most intellectual of which a Bedouin is capable, met with deserved success. 'Aakil honoured us with the desired invitation; and the day closed in a good supper and a lively evening, during which Djedey' amused the whole party, by an uncouth dance with the coffee-making negro of the governor.

Next day we remained quiet; all glad of an interval of repose before the three days' journey which was to lead us to Ḥā'yel. Sometimes we climbed the heights to get a wider range of view, sometimes we strolled about the irregular village and talked with its inhabitants; and here first we met with unmistakable proofs of that deep half-idolizing attachment which the very name of Ṭelāl claims throughout the whole of Djebel Shomer. The quiet and settled state of all things here much contrasted with the half-anarchical condition lately witnessed in the Djowf, and its war-seamed features. But the soil of Djobbah is poor, and its produce, though of the same kind with that we had left behind us, was in every way inferior to it.

The village itself so far resembles the Djowf, that I may be excused from entering on particular details regarding houses, gardens, and the like. I may here add, as an apology for brevity of description, while we pass by the different localities of Djebel Shomer, that they have almost all of them, whether large or small, much the same straggling appearance, the same mixture of dwellings and cultivation, of plantations and byways, the same neglect of fortification and defence, which distinguishes them from the compact and well-guarded villages of Nejed Proper, and denotes habitual security; but also, alas! a total disregard for whatever is known in Europe by the name of symmetry, of which no true Arab of the north, whether sleeping

or waking, had ever an idea. I say of the north, for in Ḥaṣa and 'Omān the laws of architectural proportion are known and observed, nor are they wholly absent from middle and southern Nejed.

About sunrise on the 25th of July we left Djobbah, crossed the valley to the south-east, and entered once more on a sandy desert, but a desert, as I have before hinted, of a milder and less inhospitable character than the dreary Nefood of two days back. Here the sand is thickly sprinkled with shrubs, and not altogether devoid of herbs and grass; while the undulations of the surface, running invariably from north to south, according to the general rule of that phenomenon, are much less deeply traced, though never wholly absent. We paced on all day; at nightfall we found ourselves on the edge of a vast funnel-like depression, where the sand recedes on all sides to leave bare the chalky bottom-strata below; here lights glimmering amid Bedouin tents in the depths of the valley invited us to try our chance of a preliminary supper before the repose of the night. We had, however, much ado to descend the cavity, so steep was the sandy slope; while its circular form and spiral marking reminded me of Edgar Poe's imaginative "Maelstrom." The Arabs to whom the watch-fires belonged were shepherds of the numerous Shomer tribe, whence the district, plain and mountain, takes its name. They welcomed us to a share of their supper; and a good dish of rice, instead of insipid samḥ or pasty Djereeshah, augured a certain approach to civilization.

At break of day we resumed our march, and met with camels and camel-drivers in abundance, besides a few sheep and goats. Before noon we had got clear of the sandy patch, and entered in its stead on a firm gravelly soil. Here we enjoyed an hour of midday halt and shade in a natural cavern, hollowed out in a high granite rock; itself an advanced guard of the main body of Djebel Shomer. This mountain range now rose before us, wholly unlike any other that I had ever seen; a huge mass of crag and stone, piled up in fantastic disorder, with green valleys and habitations intervening. The sun had not yet set when we reached the pretty village of Kenah, amid groves and waters, no more, however, running streams like those of Djowf, but an artificial irrigation by means of wells and buckets. At some distance from the houses stood a cluster of three or four large

over-shadowing trees, objects of peasant veneration here, as once in Palestine. The welcome of the inhabitants, when we dismounted at their doors, was hearty and hospitable, nay, even polite and considerate ; and a good meal, with a dish of fresh grapes for dessert, was soon set before us in the verandah of a pleasant little house, much reminding me of an English farm-cottage, whither the good man of the dwelling had invited us for the evening. All expressed great desire to profit by our medical skill ; and on our reply that we could not conveniently open shop except at the capital Hā'yel, several announced their resolution to visit us there ; and subsequently kept their word, though at the cost of about twenty-four miles of journey.

We rose very early. Our path, well tracked and trodden, now lay between ridges of precipitous rock, rising abruptly from a level and grassy plain ; sometimes the road was sunk in deep gorges, sometimes it opened out on wider spaces, where trees and villagers appeared, while the number of wayfarers, on foot or mounted, single or in bands, still increased as we drew nearer to the capital. About noon we came opposite to a large village called Lakeetah, where we turned aside to rest a little during the heat in the house of a wealthy inhabitant. There was an air of newness and security about the dwellings and plantations hardly to be found now-a-days in any other part of Arabia, 'Omān alone excepted. I may add also the great frequency of young trees and ground newly enclosed, a cheerful sight, yet further enhanced by the total absence of ruins, so common in the East ; hence the general effect produced by Djebel Shomer, when contrasted with most other provinces or kingdoms around, near and far, is that of a newly coined piece, in all its sharpness and shine, amid a dingy heap of defaced currency. It is a fresh creation, and shows what Arabia might be under better rule than it enjoys for the most part : an inference rendered the more conclusive by the fact that in natural and unaided fertility Djebel Shomer is perhaps the least favoured district in the entire central peninsula.

We were here close under the backbone of Djebel Shomer, whose reddish crags rose in the strangest forms on our right and left, while a narrow cleft down to the plain-level below gave opening to the capital. Very hard to bring an army through this against the will of the inhabitants, thought I ; fifty



resolute men could, in fact, hold the pass against thousands; nor is there any other approach to Hā'yel from the northern direction. The town is situated near the very centre of the mountains; it was as yet entirely concealed from our view by the windings of the road amid huge piles of rock. Meanwhile from Djobbah to Hā'yel, the whole plain gradually rises, running up between the sierras, whose course from north-east to south-west crosses two-thirds of the upper peninsula, and forms the outwork of the central high country. Hence the name of Nejed, literally "highland," in contradistinction to the coast and the outlying provinces of lesser elevation.

The sun was yet two hours' distance above the western horizon, when we threaded the narrow and winding defile, till we arrived at its further end. Here we found ourselves on the verge of a large plain, many miles in length and breadth, and girt on every side by a high mountain rampart, while right in front of us, at scarce a quarter of an hour's march, lay the town of Hā'yel surrounded by fortifications of about twenty feet in height, with bastion-towers, some round, some square, and large folding gates at intervals; it offered the same show of freshness and even of something like irregular elegance that had before struck us in the villages on our way. This, however, was a full-grown town, and its area might readily hold three hundred thousand inhabitants or more, were its streets and houses close packed like those of Brussels or Paris. But the number of citizens does not, in fact, exceed twenty or twenty-two thousand, thanks to the many large gardens, open spaces, and even plantations, included within the outer walls, while the immense palace of the monarch alone, with its pleasure grounds annexed, occupies about one-tenth of the entire city. Our attention was attracted by a lofty tower, some seventy feet in height, of recent construction and oval form, belonging to the royal residence. The plain all around the town is studded with isolated houses and gardens, the property of wealthy citizens, or of members of the kingly family, and on the far-off skirts of the plain appear the groves belonging to Kafar, 'Adwah, and other villages, placed at the openings of the mountain gorges that conduct to the capital. The town walls and buildings shone yellow in the evening sun, and the whole prospect was one of thriving security, delightful to view, though wanting in the peculiar

luxuriance of vegetation offered by the valley of Djowf. A few Bedouin tents lay clustered close by the ramparts, and the great number of horsemen, footmen, camels, asses, peasants, townsmen, boys, women, and other like, all passing to and fro on their various avocations, gave cheerfulness and animation to the scene.

We crossed the plain, and made for the town gate opposite the castle; next, with no little difficulty, prevailed on our camels to pace the high-walled street, and at last arrived at the open space in front of the palace. It was yet an hour before sunset, or rather more; the business of the day was over in Ḥā'yel, and the outer courtyard where we now stood was crowded with loiterers of all shapes and sizes. We made our camels kneel down close by the palace gate, alongside of some forty or fifty others, and then stepped back to repose our very weary limbs on a stone bench opposite the portal, and waited what might next occur.

But before we verify the Arab proverb which attributes ill-luck to occurrences of the evening, let us cast around a look on this strange scene, strange, that is, to a foreigner, but completely in harmony with the genius of the country and people. Before us are the long earth walls of the palace, enormously thick, and about thirty feet in height, pierced near the summit with loopholes rather than windows, and occupying an extent of four hundred and fifty to five hundred feet in length. The principal gate is placed, according to approved custom, in a receding angle of the wall, and flanked by high square towers; semicircular bastions advance too from space to space all the length of the front. Immediately under the shadow of the wall runs a long bench of beaten earth and stone; we observe, too, about half-way in its line, a sort of throne or raised seat, to be occupied by the monarch's most sacred person when giving public audience. The palace of Meta'ab, the king's second brother, is included in the same mass of building, but has its own entrance apart.

On the other side of the open area, that is, where we are now seated, stands a long range of warehouses and small apartments, each under lock and key. Here is stowed away the merchandize which belongs exclusively to the government; here, too, Telāl, as a general rule, lodges his guests; for no stranger, be he who he may, is ever allowed to sleep within the palace walls. In the same direction, but farther up the area, and opposite to

the residence of Meta'ab, is the large public mosque, or Djāmia'. At its angle the court opens out into the new market-place, which we will visit to-morrow. On the other side of this opening, but on the same line as the Djāmia, rises the sumptuous house of Zāmil, the chief treasurer and prime minister too—an arrangement which at least simplifies government salaries, a positive advantage in poor Arab states. Lastly, a tall gate ends the area, and gives admittance into the more plebeian High Street, which here crosses at right angles, and leads up and down through the whole breadth of the town.

At the opposite extremity of this great courtyard, and communicating with a second gate through which we had just passed, enters another large street, leading out at some distance on the plain. Towards this end of the enclosure, and still opposite the palace itself, are the dwellings of two or three principal officers of the household; and lastly, a low door, in all "the pride that apes humility," gives entrance to the abode and spacious gardens of 'Obeyd, the present king's uncle, a very important character he, and already mentioned on occasion of his first expedition against the Djowf. Enough of him for the present; he will end by becoming a personal and even too intimate an acquaintance.

About the portal, some standing, some seated on the stone platform near its entrance, are several of the subordinate officers in waiting. These men are neatly and, all things considered, cleanly clothed, in white robes and black cloaks, much like Ḥamood, whose dress we have not long since described; long silver-tipped wands, strongly resembling those wielded by that venerable class of men whom mortals call Beadles, distinguish those among them who are charged with household employment; but the greater number are of a military character, and wear silver-hilted swords. The neighbouring benches on one side of the court and on the other are thronged by a crowd of the better sort of citizens, come from their shops or houses to hear and chat over news, and to take the evening air. Few of them, save those of noble birth, wear arms; but their general appearance is every way decorous. Some, in plainer clothes, have a peculiar and puritanical look, they will be from Nejed; a slightly rakish air, on the contrary, points out the man of Kaseem. In the middle of the courtyard itself, or seated among the well-dressed citizens with true Arab



fraternity and equality, are not a few whose dingy garments and coarse features bespeak them of mechanical profession, or at least poor. Some Bedouins are mixed with the rest, and may at once be known by their scanty ragged dress and cringing attitude. The lowest in the nomade scale here present are the uncouth Sherarat, and the still more uncouth Şolibah; while the Shomer, near akin to many of the townsmen, and somewhat polished by more frequent intercourse with the civilized world, may stand highest in this category.

At our first appearance a slight stir takes place. The customary salutations are given and returned by those nearest at hand; and a small knot of inquisitive idlers, come up to see what and whence we are, soon thickens into a dense circle. Many questions are asked, first of our conductor, Djedey', and next of ourselves; our answers are tolerably laconic. Meanwhile a thin middle-sized individual, whose countenance bears the type of smiling urbanity and precise etiquette, befitting his office at court, approaches us. His neat and simple dress, the long silver-circled staff in his hand, his respectful salutation, his politely important manner, all denote him one of the palace retinue. It is Seyf, the court chamberlain, whose special duty is the reception and presentation of strangers. We rise to receive him, and are greeted with a decorous, "Peace be with you, brothers," in the fullness of every inflection and accent that the most scrupulous grammarian could desire. We return an equally Priscianic salutation. "Whence have you come? may good attend you!" is the first question. Of course we declare ourselves physicians from Syria, for our bulkier wares had been disposed of in the Djowf, and we were now resolved to depend on medical practice alone. "And what do you desire here in our town? may God grant you success!" says Seyf. "We desire the favour of God most high, and, secondly, that of Telâl," is our answer, conforming our style to the correctest formulas of the country, which we had already begun to pick up. Whereupon Seyf, looking very sweet the while, begins, as in duty bound, a little encomium on his master's generosity and other excellent qualities, and assures us that we have exactly reached right quarters.

But alas! while my comrade and myself were exchanging side-glances of mutual felicitation at such fair beginnings,



Nemesis suddenly awoke to claim her due, and the serenity of our horizon was at once overcast by an unexpected and most unwelcome cloud. My readers are doubtless already aware that nothing was of higher importance for us than the most absolute incognito, above all in whatever regarded European origin and character. In fact, once known for Europeans, all intimate access and sincerity of intercourse with the people of the land would have been irretrievably lost, and our onward progress to Nejed rendered totally impossible. These were the very least inconveniences that could follow such a detection; others much more disagreeable might also be well apprehended. Now thus far nothing had occurred capable of exciting serious suspicion, no one had recognized us, or pretended to recognize. We, too, on our part, had thought that Gaza, Ma'ān, and perhaps the Djowf, were the only localities where this kind of recognition had to be feared. But we had reckoned without our host; the first real danger was reserved for Hā'yel, within the very limits of Nejed, and with all the desert-belt between us and our old acquaintances.

For while Seyf was running through the preliminaries of his politeness, I saw to my horror amid the circle of bystanders a figure, a face well known to me scarce six months before in Damascus, and well known to many others also, now merchant, now trader, now post-contractor, shrewd, enterprising and active, though nigh fifty years of age, and intimate with many Europeans of considerable standing in Syria and Bagdad—one, in short, accustomed to all kinds of men, and not to be easily imposed on by any.

While I involuntarily stared dismay on my friend, and yet doubted if it could possibly be he, all incertitude was dispelled by his cheerful salutation, in the confidential tone of an old acquaintance, followed by wondering enquiries as to what wind had blown me hither, and what I meant to do here in Hā'yel.

Wishing him most heartily—somewhere else, I had nothing for it but to “fix a vacant stare,” to give a formal return of greeting, and then silence.

But misfortunes never come single. While I was thus on my defensive against so dangerous an antagonist in the person of my free and easy friend, lo! a tall, sinister-featured individual

comes up, clad in the dress of an inhabitant of Kaseem, and abruptly breaks in with, "And I too have seen him at Damascus," naming at the same time the place and date of the meeting, and specifying exactly the circumstances most calculated to set me down for a genuine European.

Had he really met me as he said? I cannot precisely say; the place he mentioned was one whither men, half spies, half travellers, and whole intriguers from the interior districts, nay, even from Nejed itself, not unfrequently resort; and as I myself was conscious of having paid more than one visit there, my officious interlocutor might very possibly have been one of those present on some such occasion. So that although I did not now recognize him in particular, there was a strong intrinsic probability in favour of his ill-timed veracity; and his thus coming in to support the first witness in his assertions, rendered my predicament, already unsafe, yet worse.

But ere I could frame an answer or resolve what course to hold, up came a third, who, by overshooting the mark, put the game into our hands. He too salaams me as an old friend, and then, turning to those around, now worked up to a most extraordinary pitch of amazed curiosity, says, "And I also know him perfectly well, I have often met him at Cairo, where he lives in great wealth in a large house near the Kaṣṣ-el-'Eynee; his name is 'Abd-es-Ṣaleeb, he is married, and has a very beautiful daughter, who rides an expensive horse," &c. &c. &c.

Here at last was a pure invention or mistake (for I know not which it was) that admitted of a flat denial. "Aṣṣaḥek' Allah," "May Heaven set you right," said I; "never did I live at Cairo, nor have I the blessing of any horse-riding young ladies for daughters." Then, looking very hard at my second detector, towards whom I had all the right of doubt, "I do not remember having ever seen you; think well as to what you say; many a man besides myself has a reddish beard and straw-coloured mustachios," taking pains however not to seem particularly "careful to answer him in this matter," but as if merely questioning the precise identity. But for the first of the trio I knew not what to do or to reply, so I continued to look at him with a killing air of inquisitive stupidity, as though not fully understanding his meaning.

But Seyf, though himself at first somewhat staggered by this

sudden downpour of recognition, was now reassured by the discomfiture of the third witness, and came to the convenient conclusion that the two others were no better worthy of credit. "Never mind them," exclaimed he, addressing himself to us, "they are talkative liars, mere gossipers ; let them alone, they do not deserve attention ; come along with me to the K'hāwah in the palace, and rest yourselves." Then turning to my poor Damascene friend, whose only wrong was to have been over-much in the right, he sharply chid him, and next the rest, and led us off, most glad to follow the leader, through the narrow and dark portal into the royal residence.

After passing between files of wandsmen and swordsmen, Arabs and negroes, we entered on a small court, where, under a shed, was arranged the dreaded artillery of Telāl, nine pieces in all, of different calibre, four only mounted on gun-carriages, and out of the four just three serviceable. Of this last number were the two large iron mortars that had played so important a part in the siege of the Djowf. The third, a long brass field piece, bore the date of 1810, with a very English "G. R." (illegible, I need hardly say, for its actual possessors) embossed above. The other guns were all more or less injured, and quite unfit for duty, but this was a circumstance unknown to the Arabs around, and perhaps to Telāl himself, and "all the nine" military muses seemed to impress equal awe on the minds of the beholders. This tremendous battery had been in part furnished by the Wahhābee monarch to 'Abd-Allah, father and predecessor of Telāl, and in part procured by the agents of the present reign at the seaport of Koweyt on the Persian Gulf, an active and thriving little town.

We traversed this court, and entered a second, one side of which was formed by the ladies' apartments, duly separated by a high blind wall from profane intercourse, and the other by the K'hāwah or guest-room. This apartment was about eighty feet in length by thirty or more in breadth, and of height proportionate ; the beams of the flat roof (for vaulting is here unknown) rested on six large round columns in a central row. It was of evidently recent construction, well lighted, and perfectly neat. The coffee furnace was of dimensions proportionate to those of the hall, and by its side was seated a sturdy negro, who rose at our approach. A few guests from the neigh-

bouring provinces, and some of the court attendants, were present. Two men, whose feet were loosely chained with heavy iron links, shuffled about the hall. They were state prisoners, and condemned to incarceration at his Majesty's royal will and pleasure, but were permitted the entrance of the K'hawah by way of recreation ; a curious instance of the humanity of the Arab character, even in the infliction of punishment. Imagine how the appearance of a convicted rebel in the saloons of the Tuileries or of Buckingham Palace would surprise the court ! One of these men was a chieftlet of Djowf, brought hither by Telāl on his conquest of that district, and not yet liberated, nor likely to be so in a hurry. But neither he nor his companion looked particularly miserable.

Here we remained whilst coffee was, as wont, prepared and served. Seyf, who had left us awhile, now came back to say that Telāl would soon return from his afternoon walk in a garden where he had been taking the air, and that if we would pass into the outer court we should then and there have the opportunity of paying him our introductory respects. He added that we should afterwards find our supper ready, and be provided also with good lodgings for the night ; finally, that the K'hawah and what it contained were always at our disposition so long as we should honour Hā'yel by our presence.

We rose accordingly and returned with Seyf to the outside area. It was fuller than ever, on account of the expected appearance of the monarch. A few minutes later we saw a crowd approach from the upper extremity of the place, namely, that towards the market. When the new-comers drew near, we saw them to be almost exclusively armed men, with some of the more important-looking citizens, but all on foot. In the midst of this circle, though detached from those around them, slowly advanced three personages, whose dress and deportment, together with the respectful distance observed by the rest, announced superior rank. "Here comes Telāl," said Seyf, in an undertone.

The midmost figure was in fact that of the prince himself. Short of stature, broad-shouldered, and strongly built, of a very dusky complexion, with long black hair, dark and piercing eyes, and a countenance rather severe than open, Telāl might readily be supposed above forty years in age, though he is in fact



thirty-seven or thirty-eight at most. His step was measured, his demeanour grave and somewhat haughty. His dress, a long robe of Cachemire shawl, covered the white Arab shirt, and over all he wore a delicately worked cloak of camel's hair from 'Omān, a great rarity and highly valued in this part of Arabia. His head was adorned by a brodered handkerchief, in which silk and gold thread had not been spared, and girt by a broad band of camel's hair entwined with red silk, the manufacture of Meshid 'Alee. A gold-mounted sword hung by his side, and his dress was perfumed with musk in a degree better adapted to Arab than to European nostrils. His glance never rested for a moment; sometimes it turned on his nearer companions, sometimes on the crowd; I have seldom seen so truly an "eagle eye" in rapidity and in brilliancy.

By his side walked a tall thin individual clad in garments of somewhat less costly material, but of gayer colours and embroidery than those of the king himself. His face announced unusual intelligence and courtly politeness; his sword was not, however, adorned with gold, the exclusive privilege of the royal family, but with silver only.

This was Zāmil, the treasurer and prime minister—sole minister, indeed, of the autocrat. Raised from beggary by 'Abd-Allah the late king, who had seen in the ragged orphan signs of rare capacity, he continued to merit the uninterrupted favour of his patron, and after his death had become equally, or yet more dear to Ṭelāl, who raised him from post to post till he at last occupied the highest position in the kingdom after the monarch himself. Faithful to his master, and placed by his plebeian extraction beyond reach of rival family jealousy, his even and amiable temper had made him eminently popular without the palace, and as cherished by his master within, while his extraordinary application to business, joined with a ready but calm mind, and the great services he rendered the state in his double duty, merited, in the opinion of all, those personal riches of which he made a very free and munificent display.

Of the demurely smiling 'Abd-el-Mahsin, the second companion of the king's evening walk, I will say nothing for the moment; we shall have him before long for a very intimate acquaintance and a steady friend.

Every one stood up as Ṭelāl drew nigh. Seyf gave us a sign

to follow him, made way through the crowd, and saluted his sovereign with the authorized formula of "Peace be with you, O the Protected of God!" Ṭelāl at once cast on us a penetrating glance, and addressed a question in a low voice to Seyf, whose answer was in the same tone. The prince then looked again towards us, but with a friendlier expression of face. We approached and touched his open hand, repeating the same salutation as that used by Seyf. No bow, hand-kissing, or other ceremony is customary on these occasions. Ṭelāl returned our greeting, and then, without a word more to us, whispered a moment to Seyf, and passed on through the palace gate.

"He will give you a private audience to-morrow," said Seyf, "and I will take care that you have notice of it in due time; meanwhile come to supper." The sun had already set when we re-entered the palace. This time, after passing the arsenal, we turned aside into a large square court, distinct from the former, and surrounded by an open verandah spread with mats. Two large ostriches, presents offered to Ṭelāl by some chiefs of the Ṣolibah tribe, strutted about the enclosure, and afforded much amusement to the negro-boys and scullions of the establishment. Seyf conducted us to the further side of the court, where we seated ourselves under the portico.

Hither some black slaves immediately brought the supper; the "*pièce de résistance*" was, as usual, a huge dish of rice and boiled meat, with some thin cakes of unleavened bread and dates, and small onions with chopped gourds intermixed. The cookery was better than what we had heretofore tasted, though it would, perhaps, have hardly passed muster with a Vatel. We made a hearty meal, took coffee in the *K'hāwah*, and then returned to sit awhile and smoke our pipes in the open air. Needs not say how lovely are the summer evenings, how cool the breeze, how pure the sky, in these mountainous districts.

Seyf, on his side, got our night quarters ready, and, by his orders, one of the king's magazines (I have already mentioned them) had been emptied, swept, and matted for our reception. My readers are, I should think, sufficiently acquainted with eastern customs to know that neither chairs nor tables, tubs nor washhand basins, can reasonably be expected. We entered our lodgings, closed and locked the outer door, and then fell into deep consultation what was next to be done; coming at last

to the best conclusion after a long journey; that of a sound and prolonged sleep.

While we are thus, to borrow Madge Wildfire's phrase, "in the land of Nod," it may perhaps be well, instead of recounting our dreams, to gratify the curiosity of those who would desire to learn whether we had any further encounter with our unwelcome friends from the north, and what was the sequel of their history. Be it known, then, that the first and worthiest of the two, the trader-post-contractor, had been so utterly puzzled by our chilling "cut," and subsequently by the rebukes he received from Seyf and others, that he ended in doubting his own eyes, and concluded that he must have made some strange mistake about our identity, or perhaps even his own; for, on the third day, when we once more came across each other in the street, he began a confused discourse much like that of the old woman in the ballad, "Oh dear me, it is not I," and made such very humble apologies for his past conduct, that I felt half disposed out of sheer pity to set his mind at ease with a "no mistake at all, old fellow, you were perfectly in the right." But prudence would not permit of this extra kindness; and besides, his public abjuration produced the best imaginable effect on those present, so I left him to his regrets, in which he may be plunged up to the present day, for aught I know. The following morning he left Hā'yel, nor have I since seen him anywhere.

For the man of Kaseem, his stay in this capital was yet shorter, and the next day saw him on his way home, nor did we again meet him; thus his tale, true or not, fell to the ground for want of repetition and confirmation.

As to the third, who had so obligingly set me up with house and family, he was a citizen of the town itself, and we had in consequence frequent interviews during the following weeks. But he readily gave up his unfounded pretensions to previous intimacy, and declared before all that he had mistaken his man. And thus the triple cloud, fraught with distrust and danger, passed away without further ill consequences, at least of a direct nature. But the morrow's sun is up, and we must up with him.

Our door was yet unopened, when a low rap announces a visitor. My companion undoes the bolt with a "samm'," equivalent on these occasions to "come in."



It is 'Abd-el-Maḥsin, the same whom we had seen the evening before as companion of Telāl. He enters with a "hope I don't intrude" air, and begins by excusing himself for breaking in on us so early, asks after our health, trusts that we are somewhat refreshed from the fatigues of our journey; in short, makes no less display of politeness, though without any overdoing or affectation soever, than a French marquis of the old school could to guests newly arrived at his château. He then proceeds to enquiries about our road hither, how we had fared on the way, laments over the coarse manners and ill breeding of Bedouins, and the heat of the desert. Next he shows a great desire to be instructed in medicine, adding that he is not altogether ignorant of the healing art, and in a word directs his whole conversation so as to make us feel perfectly at home, and thus proceeds to sound us on the purport of our visit to Hā'yel, and who we really were.

His appearance was certainly much in his favour, and one that inspired confidence, or even familiarity. He could not have been under fifty, but bore his years well; his complexion equal in fairness to that of most Italians, his eye large and intelligent, his features regular; in youth he must have been positively handsome; his person was slender and a little bent by advancing age; his dress extremely neat, though unadorned; a plain wand in his hand bespoke his pacific and unmilitary turn; in short, he had the look of a scientific or literary courtier, perhaps an author, certainly a gentleman. A curious half-smile, but partially disguised by the ceremonious gravity of a first visit, showed him to be no enemy to a joke, while it tempered the thoughtful expression of his large forehead and meaning eye.

Such was 'Abd-el-Maḥsin, the intimate friend and inseparable companion of the prince. He belonged to the ancient and noble family of 'Aleyyān, chiefs of the town and district of Bereydah in Ḳaseem. There he had once enjoyed the confidence of his own fellow-citizens, and the boon fellowship of Khursheed Basha the Egyptian governor, during the period that this latter held Ḳaseem before the final re-establishment of the Wakhābee dynasty. Avoiding any open part in political affairs, and devoting himself in appearance to literature and society, he was, in fact, the deepest intriguer of the province, and guided all the machinations of his relatives to deliver his country from



foreign occupation. But when a few years later 'Abd-el-Maḥsin found that Feysul had only concurred in freeing them from the tyranny of Egypt in order the better to subject them to his own, he became once more the active though secret agent of his powerful family in opposing the progress of Wahnābee preponderance and rule. At last came the ruin of the 'Aleyyān family, consummated by one of the blackest acts of perfidy that stain the annals of Central Arabia. 'Abd-el-Maḥsin escaped the first fury of the massacre that destroyed most of his relatives, but was involved in the proscription which followed immediately after, and had to flee for his life. After some months of concealment on the outskirts of the province, finding that no hope was left in his native country, he took refuge with Ṭelāl, and had now lived for about ten years in the palace of the Shomer prince, first a guest, then a friend and favourite, welcomed in moments of relaxation on account of his gaiety, his natural elegance, and his extensive knowledge of Arab history and anecdote ; but prized in more serious hours for his shrewd advice and wise counsel. When on our way home a year later my companion and myself beguiled the long hours of horseback in the plains of Mosool or the hills of Orfah by passing in review the events of our Arabian journey, we readily agreed that from Gaza to Rās-el-Hadd we had not met with any one superior, or perhaps equal, in natural endowments and cultivated intellect to 'Abd-el-Maḥsin 'Aleyyān.

Hardly had he entered on conversation than we guessed, and rightly guessed, that he had been sent by Ṭelāl in a preparatory way to the audience fixed by the king for a few hours later. We were accordingly on our guard, and stuck perseveringly to Damascus, Syria, and doctoring. On any other topics started by our friend while beating the bush, we gave very off-hand answers, implying that these things did not regard us, and to a few hesitating questions about Egypt, and even about Europe, we put on an appearance of great ignorance and unconcern.

Meanwhile it was our turn to find out everything possible about Ṭelāl and his real position, especially in what regarded the Wahnābee dynasty, and his own fashion of government. 'Abd-el-Maḥsin's answers were naturally cautious and guarded enough ; yet we were able this very morning to discover much that we had been previously ignorant of.

I give the summary of what we then learnt from our friendly visitor, combined with what fuller information the following weeks supplied. The limits of this volume will allow but few other specimens of Arabian history, as told by Arabs.

This province, in common with the rest of the peninsula, underwent the short-lived tyranny of the first Wakhābee empire at the beginning of the present century, and, like many other districts, was but transiently affected by it. The storm soon blew over, and left matters pretty much where they were before. At this period the town of Hā'yel was already looked on as in a manner the capital of Djebel Shomer, a distinction which it owed partly to its superior size and resources, and partly to its central position; yet its chiefs could not enforce their authority over any great distance beyond the walls of the town, at least in a regular way. The supreme rule was held by the family of Beyt 'Alee, ancient denizens of the city, and who seem to have fully appreciated both in theory and practice "the right divine of kings to govern wrong."

But there lived then in the same town of Hā'yel a young and enterprising chief, of the family Rasheed, belonging to the clan of Dja'afer, the noblest branch of the Shomer tribe. Many of his near relations were Bedouins, though his own direct ancestors had long occupied the social position of townsmen. His name was 'Abd-Allah-ebn-Rasheed; wealthy, as wealth here goes, high-born, and conscious of ability and vigour, he aspired to wrest their hitherto undisputed pre-eminence from the chiefs of Beyt 'Alee; his own powerful and numerous relatives lent their aid to his endeavour. The inhabitants of Hā'yel favoured some the one and some the other party, and on the whole 'Abd-Allah's faction was the stronger within the walls of the capital. But the neighbouring village of Kefar held to a man for Beyt 'Alee, and Kefar was at that time almost equal in strength and population to Hā'yel; indeed, to judge by popular song and local tradition, our only guide here, Kefar was considered the more aristocratic town of the two.

After many preliminary bickerings, the struggle between 'Abd-Allah and Beyt 'Alee began; but the result proved unfavourable to the young competitor for sovereignty, and he was driven into exile. This happened about the year 1818 or 1820. With a few of his relatives, fugitives like himself, he took the road of

the Djowf, in hopes of refuge and alliance; but not finding either, he passed on to Wadi Sirḥan, whose depths have ever been a common asylum for men in a similar predicament up to the present time. While he and his followers were wandering amid the labyrinths of the valley, they were suddenly attacked by a strong party of 'Anezeh Bedouins, hereditary enemies of the Shomer clan. 'Abd-Allah and his companions fought well, but numbers gained the day. The Benoo-Dja'afer fell without exception on the field of battle; the victorious 'Anezeh "stripped and gashed the slain;" none of 'Abd-Allah's companions remained alive, and he himself was left for dead amid the corpses on the sand.

The 'Anezeh, as is often their wont, "made assurance doubly sure" by cutting the throats of the wounded where they lay on the ground; and in this respect 'Abd-Allah had fared no better than his comrades. But the destined possessor of a throne was not thus to perish before his time. While he lay senseless, his blood fast ebbing from the gaping gash, the locusts of the desert, so runs the Arab tale, surrounded the chief, and with their wings and feet cast the hot sand into his wounds, till this rude stytic stayed the life-stream in its flow. Meanwhile a flock of *Ḳaṭa*, a partridge-like bird common in these regions, hovered over him to protect him from the burning sun—a service for which unwounded travellers in the Arabian wilds would be hardly less grateful.

A merchant of Damascus, accompanied by a small caravan, was on his way home to Syria from the Djowf, and chanced to pass close by the scene of carnage and miracle. He saw the wounded youth, and the wondrous intervention of Heaven in his behalf. Amazed at the spectacle, and conjecturing no ordinary future for one whose life was so dear to Providence, he alighted by his side, bound up his wounds, applied what means for reviving suspended animation the place and circumstances could allow of, placed him on one of his camels, and took him to Damascus.

There 'Abd-Allah, now the charitable merchant's guest, and treated by him like a son, 'speedily recovered strength and vigour. His generous preserver then supplied him with arms and provision for the way, and sent him back with a well-stored girdle to Arabia once more.

But to Djebel Shomer he could not return as a prince, and would not return as a subject. So, following a circuitous track, he passed on to the Inner Nejed, and there offered his services in quality of "condottiere" to Turkee, son of 'Abd-Allah-ebn-Sa'ood. Turkee was then actively engaged in reconstructing his father's kingdom, ruined by the Egyptian invasion, and in recovering one after another the provinces formerly subject to Wahnabee domination. From such a prince 'Abd-Allah naturally found a ready welcome, and work in abundance. He was the foremost in every fray, and soon became the head of a considerable division in the Wahnabee army.

In 1830 or thereabouts, for I have been unable to procure from Arab negligence the exact date of this or of many other important incidents, Turkee resolved on the conquest of Ḥaṣa, one of the richest appanages of the old Nejdean crown. But since public affairs did not permit the withdrawing of his own personal presence from Ri'ad, his capital, he placed his eldest son Feyṣul at the head of the royal armies, and sent them to the invasion of the eastern coast. 'Abd-Allah as a matter of course joined the expedition, and, though a stranger by birth, was much looked up to by Feyṣul and his officers, and was almost their leader in all military operations.

Hardly had the Wahnabee army reached the frontiers of Ḥaṣa, and, having passed the narrow defiles of Ghoweyr, where we too, gentle reader, will pass in due time, were just proceeding to lay siege to the town of Hofhoof when news reached them that Turkee had been treacherously assassinated during the evening prayers in the great mosque of the city by his own cousin Meshāree, and that the murderer had already occupied the vacant throne.

A council of war was at once called. The "Hushais" there present, and they were the greater number, advised Feyṣul to continue the war in Ḥaṣa, and after the conquest of that opulent province, return rich with its spoils to wrest the crown from his usurping relative. But 'Abd-Allah, a very Ahithophel in counsel, observed that such delay would only serve to give Meshāree better leisure for collecting troops, fortifying the capital, and thus becoming a yet more dangerous, if not an insurmountable enemy. Accordingly, he insisted on Feyṣul's immediate return with all his troops to Ri'ad, as the surest way to take Meshāree



unprepared, avenge the yet warm blood of Turkee, and secure the capital and the central provinces for the rightful heir. For what concerned Ḥaṣa, its conquest could be only all the more certain for being a moment deferred.

Feyṣul, wiser than Absalom, subscribed to 'Abd-Allah's opinion, and the event fully justified him. Without loss of time the camp was broken up, and the whole army in movement on its backward way for Ri'ad, under whose walls forced marches speedily brought them, while Meshāree yet imagined his competitor far off on the other side of the passes in the distant plains of Ḥaṣa.

On the first appearance of the lawful prince, all Nejed rose round his banner. The capital followed the example, the gates were thrown open, and Feyṣul entered Ri'ad amid enthusiastic acclamations, and without striking a blow.

But Meshāree still occupied the palace, whose high walls and massive outworks could stand a long siege, as sieges go in Arabia; while within the fortress he had at his disposition all the state treasury, artillery, and ammunition, beside good store of provisions in case of blockade; lastly, he was protected by a powerful garrison of his own retainers, well paid and well armed. Thus provided, he determined to hold out, and wait a turn of fortune. It came, but against him.

Feyṣul, on his side, ordered an immediate assault on the fortress. It was delivered, but the thick walls and iron-bound gates, joined to the desperate valour of the defenders, baffled all efforts; and the assailants were reduced to wait the slow results of a regular siege.

This lasted twenty days without bringing material advantage to either party. But on the twenty-first night, 'Abd-Allah, desirous to bring matters to a conclusion by any means, however hazardous, took with him two sturdy companions of his Shomer kinsmen, refugees like himself, and, under cover of darkness, went roaming round the castle walls in hopes of detecting some unguarded spot. At a narrow window high up under the battlements (it was afterwards pointed out to me when I was at the very place) a light was glimmering. 'Abd-Allah drew close underneath, took a pebble, and threw it up against the window. A head appeared and called out in a muffled tone, "Who are you?" 'Abd-Allah recognized the voice

of an old palace retainer, long in the service of the deceased monarch, and his own intimate friend. He answered by his name. "What is your purpose?" said the old man. "Let us down a cord, and we will arrange the rest."

Presently the rustling of a rope came down the wall. 'Abd-Allah and his two companions clambered up one after the other, and soon stood together within the palace chamber. "Where does Meshāree sleep?" was the ominous question. The servant of Turkee indicated the way. Threading the dark corridors, barefoot and in silence, the three adventurers reached the door of the usurper's bedchamber. They tried it; it was bolted from within. "In the name of God!" exclaimed 'Abd-Allah, and with one vigorous thrust burst the lock, and the room lay open.

There lay Meshāree, with a pair of loaded pistols under his pillow. At the noise he started up, and saw three dark outlines before him. Seizing his weapons, he fired them off in quick succession, and the two companions of 'Abd-Allah fell, one dead, the other death-wounded, yet alive. But 'Abd-Allah remained unscathed, and rushed on his victim, sword in hand. Meshāree, a man of herculean size, seized the arms of his enemy and grappled with him. Both fell on the floor, but Meshāree kept firm hold on the sword-arm of 'Abd-Allah, and bent himself to wrest the weapon from his hand. While thus they rolled together in doubtful struggle, the dying comrade of 'Abd-Allah, collecting his last strength, dragged himself to their side, and seized the wrist of Meshāree with such convulsive force, that it made him for an instant relax his hold. That instant 'Abd-Allah freed his sword, and plunged it again and again into the body of his antagonist, who expired without a struggle.

Not a cry had been raised, not an alarm given. 'Abd-Allah cut off the head of Meshāree where he lay, and with it in his hand returned to the chamber where the servant of Turkee awaited trembling the result of the attempt. By the lamplight both made themselves sure that the disfigured features were indeed those of the usurper. Then without a moment's loss 'Abd-Allah went to the window and, leaning out, raised his voice to its utmost pitch to alarm the camp of Feysul, whose advanced guard was not far from the palace. Several soldiers started up, and when they approached the wall, "Take the

dog's head," exclaimed 'Abd-Allah, and flung his bloody trophy in the midst. A shout of triumph echoed throughout the city. Meanwhile the servant of Turkee rushed down to the outer palace gates, and threw them open, proclaiming Amān, or quarter, to all of Meshāree's retinue who would acknowledge Feysul for their master. A few minutes more, and Feysul himself stood within his father's walls, now his own.

No resistance was offered. "God has willed it," was the only comment of Meshāree's followers as they presented unhesitating allegiance to their new sovereign. Feysul was now undisputed master throughout Nejed, and the circumstances of his accession only secured him the more the attachment of his subjects.

The son of Turkee was not ungrateful to him whose intrepidity had placed him on his father's throne. He openly acknowledged—an honourable proceeding in a king—the eminent services of 'Abd-Allah, and determined to requite his daring mercenary with a crown, bestowed in return for the crown thus acquired. To this end he named him absolute governor of his native province, Shomer, with right of succession, and supplied him with troops and all other means for the establishment of his rule.

'Abd-Allah returned to Hā'yel, now no longer a proscribed exile, but a powerful and dreaded chieftain, with an army at his bidding. He soon drove out the rival family of Beyt 'Alee from the town, where his own authority was henceforth supreme. Here he fixed his residence, while he intrusted the fulness of his vengeance on the ill-fated chieftains of Beyt 'Alee to his younger brother 'Obeyd, "the Wolf," to give him the name by which he is commonly known, a name well earned by his unrelenting cruelty and deep deceit. The Beyt 'Alee, after a flight into Kaseem, were cut off root and branch; one child alone, hidden in a small village on the outskirts of Kaseem, escaped the slayers. When Telāl years after ascended the throne, he sent for the lad, the only representative now surviving of his hereditary enemies, gave him estates and riches, and installed him in a handsome dwelling within the capital itself, thus with rare but politic generosity obviating the last chances of a rival faction.

'Abd-Allah's main care, meanwhile, was to consolidate his

power in Djebel Shomer itself. Before long he saw himself sole master of the whole mountain district. But beyond 'Āja' and Solma his sway did not extend, and the conquests made by his brother in the south were according to the previous stipulation given over to the Wāhhābee monarch. 'Abd-Allah too all his lifetime paid a stated tribute to Feyṣul, of whom he was in fact a mere viceroy, while, the more to ensure the support of his powerful neighbour and jealous benefactor, he caused the Wāhhābee religion to be recognized officially for that of the new state, and encouraged the Nejdean Meṭow'wā'as (a term already explained) in their zeal for the extirpation of the many local superstitious practices still observed in Djebel Shomer. He did not, however, neglect the while to strengthen his own national influence, and to this end he had at an early period contracted a marriage alliance with a powerful chieftain's family of Dja'afer, his near kinsman by blood. Strong in the support of this restless clan, who cared little about Wāhhābee dogmas and enactments which they well knew could never reach them, he subdued with their help the rivalry of town and country nobles, and gratified at once his own ambition and the rapacity of his Bedouin allies by the measures that crushed his domestic enemies and ensured his pre-eminence. Plots were formed against him, broken, and formed again; hired assassins dogged him in the streets, open rebellion broke out in the province, but 'Abd-Allah escaped every danger and prostrated every opponent, till his "star," less fickle if less famous than that of the Corsican, became a proverb for good fortune in Shomer; it was no other than his own calculating courage and inflexible resolve. Yet his memory is scarcely a favourite with the citizens of Ḥā'yel, little disposed to sympathize with Wāhhābees and Bedouins; and the weight of the new government pressed heaviest, as needs was, on the best and most thriving portion of the general population.

Towards the latter part of his reign 'Abd-Allah took a measure eminently calculated, at least under the actual circumstances, to secure the permanence of his dynasty. Hitherto he had dwelt in a quarter of the capital which the old chieftains and the nobility had mainly chosen for their domicile, and where the new monarch was surrounded by men his equals in birth and of even more ancient title to command. But now he



added a new quarter to the town, and there laid the foundations of a vast palace destined for the future abode of the king and the display of all his grandeur, amid streets and nobles of his own creation. The walls of the projected edifice were fast rising when he died, almost suddenly, in 1844 or 1845, leaving three sons, Ṭelāl, Meta'ab, and Moḥammed, the eldest scarce twenty years of age, besides his only surviving brother 'Obeyd, who could not then have been much under fifty.

Ṭelāl was already highly popular, much more so than his father, and had given early tokens of those superior qualities which accompanied him to the throne. All parties united to proclaim him sole heir to the kingdom and lawful successor to the regal power, and thus the rival pretensions of 'Obeyd, hated by many and feared by all, were smothered at the outset and put aside without a contest.

The young sovereign possessed, in fact, all that Arab ideas require to ensure good government and lasting popularity. Affable towards the common people, reserved and haughty with the aristocracy, courageous and skilful in war, a lover of commerce and building in time of peace, liberal even to profusion, yet always careful to maintain and augment the state revenue, neither over-strict nor yet scandalously lax in religion, secret in his designs, but never known to break a promise once given, or violate a plighted faith; severe in administration, yet averse to bloodshed, he offered the very type of what an Arab prince should be. I might add, that among all rulers or governors, European or Asiatic, with whose acquaintance I have ever chanced to be honoured, I know few equal in the true art of government to Ṭelāl, son of 'Abd-Allah-ebn-Rasheed.

His first cares were directed to adorn and civilize the capital. Under his orders, enforced by personal superintendence, the palace commenced by his father was soon brought to completion. But he added, what probably his father would hardly have thought of, a long row of warehouses, the dependencies and property of the same palace; next he built a market-place consisting of about eighty shops or magazines, destined for public commerce and trade, and lastly constructed a large mosque for the official prayers of Friday. Round the palace, and in many other parts of the town, he opened streets, dug wells, and laid out extensive gardens, besides strengthening the old fortifi-

cations all round and adding new ones. At the same time he managed to secure at once the fidelity and the absence of his dangerous uncle by giving him charge of those military expeditions which best satisfied the restless energy of 'Obeyd. The first of these wars was directed, I know not on what pretext, against Kheybar. But as Ṭelāl intended rather to enforce submission than to inflict ruin, he associated with 'Obeyd in the military command his own brother Meta'ab, to put a check on the ferocity of the former. Kheybar was conquered, and Ṭelāl sent thither, as governor in his name, a young man of Hā'yel, prudent and gentle, whom I subsequently met when he was on a visit at the capital.

Not long after, the inhabitants of Kaseem, weary of Wahhā-bee tyranny, turned their eyes towards Ṭelāl, who had already given a generous and inviolable asylum to the numerous political exiles of that district. Secret negotiations took place, and at a favourable moment the entire uplands of that province—after a fashion not indeed peculiar to Arabia—annexed themselves to the kingdom of Shomer by universal and unanimous suffrage. Ṭelāl made suitable apologies to the Nejdean monarch, the original sovereign of the annexed district; he could not resist the popular wish; it had been forced on him, &c. &c. &c.,—but Western Europe is familiar with the style. Feẕṣul felt the inopportuneness of a quarrel with the rapidly growing power to which he himself had given origin only a few years before, and, after a wry face or two, swallowed the pill. Meanwhile Ṭelāl, knowing the necessity of a high military reputation both at home and abroad, undertook in person a series of operations against Teyma' and its neighbourhood, and at last against the Djowf itself. Everywhere his arms were successful, and his moderation in victory secured the attachment of the vanquished themselves.

Other expeditions of minor consequence, but always fortunate in their result, were headed by Ṭelāl; while 'Obeyd is said to have taken the field above forty times. These military doings, in which there was often more display than slaughter, were principally directed against the Bedouins, who occupied, as a glance at the map will show, a very large portion of Ṭelāl's domains, and whom that prince made it his capital business to put down everywhere. With the nomades of the outer districts

he had no great difficulty; but he found much more with his own kinsmen and near neighbours, the Arabs of Shomer.

In order to carry out his views for enriching the country by the benefits of free and regular commerce, security on the high roads and the cessation of plundering forays were indispensable. Now the tribe of Dja'afar, his own blood relations, had grown especially insolent through the favour of 'Abd-Allah, whose instruments they had been in subduing the towns and villages of the mountain. Ṭelāl, who had not the same need of them, played his father's game backwards, subduing these same Bedouins by the means of the very populations whom they had formerly oppressed, and who were naturally eager for their turn of revenge; while the quarrels of the clansmen among themselves afforded him frequent occasion for setting them one against another, till, weakened and divided, they all in common submitted to his yoke. "Divide et impera," is a maxim known to Arab, no less than to European statesmanship. Henceforth no Bedouin in Djebel Shomer, or throughout the whole kingdom, could dare to molest traveller or peasant.

This obstacle removed, Ṭelāl applied himself with characteristic vigour and good sense to the execution of more pacific projects. Merchants from Baṣrah, from Meshil 'Alee and Wāsiṭ, shopkeepers from Medinah and even from Yemen, were invited by liberal offers to come and establish themselves in the new market of Hā'yel. With some Ṭelāl made government contracts equally lucrative to himself and to them; to others he granted privileges and immunities; to all protection and countenance. Many of these traders belonged to the Shiya'a sect, hated by all good Sunnites, doubly hated by the Wahhābees. But Ṭelāl affected not to perceive their religious discrepancies, and silenced all murmurs by marks of special favour towards these very dissenters, and also by the advantages which their presence was not long in procuring for the town. The desired impulse was given, and Hā'yel became a centre of trade and industry, and many of its inhabitants followed the example of the foreigners thus settled among them, and rivalled them in diligence and in wealth.

All this, however, could not but irritate the Wahhābee faction of the country, at whose head stood the sanguinary fanatic 'Obeyd. Feysul, too, already annoyed by the Ḳaseem annexa-

tion, now sent forth from his Nejdean fastnesses loud protestations against the laxity of his "brother," Ṭelāl. Besides, horrible to Wahnābee thought and hearing, Ṭelāl was rumoured to indulge in the heretical pleasure of tobacco, to wear silk, and to be very seldom seen in the mosque; though indeed it might be charitably hoped that he said his prayers at home. Lastly, and this was no good sign in Wahnābee eyes, he showed much more disposition to pardon prisoners or criminals than to behead them; and the encouragement he gave to commerce did not seem, from their point of view, consistent with the character of a true Muslim.

In spite of all Ṭelāl steadily pursued his way, while his dexterous prudence threw over these enormities a veil sufficient for decency, if not for absolute concealment. If he smoked, it was only in private, and by way of remedy, prescribed by the best physicians, for some occult disease, which admitted of no other means of cure; no sooner shall the malady be removed, than he will give it up. If he harboured Shiya'as, it was that they had to his own personal knowledge declared themselves sincere converts to the Sonnee creed. The commerce of Ḥā'yel was not his, but the work of private individuals, with whom, much to his regret, he could not interfere. What excuse he made for his unorthodox leniency in war and judgment I did not hear, but I doubt not that it was a plausible one. And finally, if he was obliged by business to absent himself sometimes from the mosque, he always took care that his uncle or some one of the family should be there to represent him :—

Ne'er went to church, 'twas such a busy life ;  
But duly sent his family and wife.

But above and besides apologies, judicious presents despatched from time to time to the Nejed, and an alliance brought about with one of Feyṣul's numerous daughters, went far to appease the Wahnābee. In his own kingdom also Ṭelāl made suitable concessions to orthodox zeal. The public sale of tobacco was prohibited; and if any went on in a contraband way in back shops or under private roofs, government could not be held responsible. Although silk was tolerated for wear, orders were given that the ungodly material should be mixed with so much cotton as to render it no longer an object of strict and legal



animadversion. In the capital, where Nejdean spies often came, the inhabitants were requested to pay fitting attendance on public prayers, and the mosque became tolerably full. Besides 'Obeyd was so regular and devout, so far from the abominations of silk and tobacco, so frequent in long recitations of the Coran and invectives against infidels, that his good example might almost atone for and cover the scandals given by his nephew, and yet more by Meta'ab, a very "wild young man," whose eternal Nargheelah and silken dress, unsanctified by a single thread of cotton, shocked pious noses and eyes, and constituted a crime of which said one day a Nejdean Meṭow'wāa', pointing to the gay head-dress of the prince, "all other wickedness may be forgiven, but *that* never." Whereon Meta'ab, in a towering passion, turned the over-zealous censor unceremoniously out of doors. I return to Ṭelāl.

Towards his own subjects his conduct is uniformly of a nature to merit their obedience and attachment, and few sovereigns have here met with better success. Once a day, often twice, he gives public audience, hears patiently, and decides in person, the minutest causes with great good sense. To the Bedouins, no insignificant portion of his rule, he makes up for the restraint he imposes, and the tribute he levies from them, by a profusion of hospitality not to be found elsewhere in the whole of Arabia from 'Aḳabah to 'Aden. His guests at the midday and evening meal are never less than fifty or sixty, and I have often counted up to two hundred at a banquet, while presents of dress and arms are of frequent if not of daily occurrence. It is hard for Europeans to estimate how much popularity such conduct brings an Asiatic prince. Meanwhile the townsfolk and villagers love him for the more solid advantages of undisturbed peace at home, of flourishing commerce, of extended dominion, and military glory.

To capital punishment he is decidedly adverse, and the severest penalty with which he has hitherto chastised political offences is banishment or prison. Indeed, even in cases of homicide or murder, he has been known not unfrequently to avail himself of the option allowed by Arab custom between a fine and retaliation, and to buy off the offender, by bestowing on the family of the deceased the allotted price of blood from his own private treasury, and that from a pure motive of

humanity. When execution does take place, it is always by beheading ; nor is indeed any other mode of putting to death customary in Arabia. Stripes, however, are not uncommon, though administered on the broad back, not on the sole of the foot. They are the common chastisement for minor offences, like stealing, cursing, or quarrelling ; in this last case both parties usually come in for their share.

With his numerous retainers he is almost over-indulgent, and readily pardons a mistake or a negligence ; falsehood alone he never forgives ; and it is notorious that whoever has once lied to Telāl must give up all hopes of future favour.

In private life he relaxes much of his official gravity ; laughs, jokes, chats, enjoys poetry and tales, and smokes, but only in presence of his more intimate friends. He has three wives, taken each and all, it would seem, from some political motive. One is the daughter of Feysul, the Wahnabee monarch, a second belongs to a noble family of Hā'yel, a third is from among his kinswomen of the tribe of Dja'afar ; thus in a way conciliating three different interests, but uniting them in one household. He has three sons : the eldest named Bedr, a clever and handsome lad of twelve or thereabouts ; the second, Bander ; the third is 'Abd-Allah, a very pretty and intelligent child of five or six. He has some daughters, too, but I do not know their number, for here, as elsewhere in the East, they are looked on as something rather to be ashamed of than otherwise, and accordingly are never mentioned.

Such is Telāl. His reign has now lasted nearly twenty years, and hitherto with unvaried and well-deserved prosperity. He has gone far to civilize the most barbarous third of the Arabian continent, and has established law and security where they had been unknown for ages past. We shall now see him in a more intimate and personal point of view.

'Abd-el-Mahsin stayed with us awhile, and then left us, saying that the public audience of the day was drawing nigh, and that his attendance there would be expected ; for ourselves we were to be admitted immediately afterwards to a private interview. Meanwhile we may reasonably conjecture that he went to tell Telāl of his own espionage, and conjectures regarding the Syrian adventurers.

The sun was now tolerably high in heaven ; but as the long

palace wall faced the west, the seats beneath it and even a good part of the courtyard were yet in shade. When morning advanced this space gradually filled up with groups of citizens, countrymen, and Bedouins, some to despatch business, others merely as lookers on. About nine, if I judged correctly of the time from the solar altitude, Ṭelāl, "dressed in all his best," and surrounded by a score of armed attendants, with his third brother Moḥammed at his side (for the second, Meta'ab, was absent from Hā'yel, nor did he return till some days later), issued in due state and gravity from the palace portal, and took his seat on the raised dais in the centre against the wall. 'Abd-el-Maḥsin and Zāmil placed themselves close by, while officers and attendants, to the number of sixty or thereabouts, filled up the line. Immediately in front of Ṭelāl, but squatted on the bare ground, were our Sherarat companions, the 'Azzām chiefs, every one with his never-failing camel-switch in his hand; around and behind sat or stood a crowd of spectators, for the occasion was one of some solemnity.

The audience lasted about half an hour, during which the 'Azzām chieftains or ragamuffins presented their coarse Bedouin submission, much like runaway hounds crouching before their whipper-in, when brought back to the kennel and the lash. Ṭelāl accepted it, though without giving them to understand his own personal intentions respecting them and their clansmen, and detained them for several days without any decisive answer, thus affording them suitable leisure to experience the profusion of his hospitality, and to become yet more deeply impressed with the display of his power.

"The Arab's understanding is in his eyes," is here a common proverb, and current among all, whether Bedouins or townsmen. It implies, "the Arab judges of things as he sees them present before him, not in their causes or consequences:" keen and superficial. This is eminently true of the Bedouins, though more or less of every Arab whatsoever; it is also true in a measure of all children, even European, who in this resemble not a little the "gray barbarian." A huge palace, a few large pieces of artillery, armed men in gay dresses, a copious supper, a great crowd, there are no better arguments for persuading nomades into submission and awe; and one may feel perfectly safe that they will never inquire too deeply whether the cannon

are serviceable, the armed men faithful, the income of the treasury sure, or the supper of wholesome digestion. This Ṭelāl knows right well, and in this he seems to have the advantage over many who have attempted to establish their influence, partial or total, over the Arab race.

Other minor affairs are now concluded ; the levee is at last over, Ṭelāl rises, and, accompanied by Zāmil, Moḥammed, Sa'eed (his head cavalry officer), a Meshid merchant named Ḥasan, and two or three others, slowly moves off towards the farther end of the court where it joins the market-place. Seyf comes up to us, and bids us follow.



## CHAPTER IV

## LIFE IN ḤĀ'YEL

Ueberall regt sich Bildung und Streben,  
 Alles will sich mit Farben beleben,  
 Doch an Blumen fehlt's in Revier,  
 Sie nimmt geputzte Menschen dafür.  
 Kehre dich um von diesen Höhen  
 Nach der Stadt zurück zu sehen.—*Göthe*

*Private Audience of Ṭelāl—His Suspicions—Our House—We begin Doctoring—Plan of Life and Action—Our Daily Life—A Walk out of Town ; View Round Ḥā'yel—Market-place Early—Visitors and Patients—'Ojeyl and his Brother—'Abd-el-Mahsin and Ṭelāl's Three Children—Mohammed-el-Kadee—Peasant of Mogah—Doheym—Kaseem Immigration—Market near Noon—Interior of Ḥā'yel—Doheym's House and Family—A Fever Case—Walk through the Town—Mirage—Prayers of the 'Agr and Sermon—Purity of Elocution in Ḥā'yel—Ṭelāl at the Mosque—His Afternoon Audiences—The Emeer Rosheyd—Dohey's House and Family—Literary Meetings in a Garden—Evenings at Ḥā'yel—New Course of Events—Third Interview with Ṭekāl—A Shomer Passport—'Obeyd's Letter on our Account to 'Abd-Allah at Riad—Reasons for leaving Ḥā'yel—Our Guides for Kaseem—Farewell Visits of 'Abd-el-Mahsin, Zāmil, and Others—Mutual Regrets—We quit Ḥā'yel.*

ṬELĀL once free from the mixed crowd, pauses a moment till we rejoin him. The simple and customary salutations are given and returned. I then present him with our only available testimonial, the scrap written by Ḥamood from the Djowf. He opens it, and hands it over to Zāmil, better skilled in reading than his master. Then laying aside all his wonted gravity, and assuming a good-humoured smile, he takes my hand in his right and my companion's in his left, and thus walks on with us through the court, past the mosque, and down the market-place, while his attendants form a moving wall behind and on either side.

He was in his own mind thoroughly persuaded that we were, as we appeared, Syrians ; but imagined, nor was he entirely in the wrong thus far, that we had other objects in view than mere

medical practice. But if he was right in so much, he was less fortunate in the interpretation he chose to put on our riddle, having imagined that our real scope must be to buy horses for some government, of which we must be the agents; a conjecture which had certainly the merit of plausibility. However, Ṭelāl had, I believe, no doubt on the matter, and had already determined to treat us well in the horse business, and to let us have a good bargain, as it shortly appeared.

Accordingly he began a series of questions and cross-questions, all in a jocose way, but so that the very drift of his inquiries soon allowed us to perceive what he really esteemed us. We, following our previous resolution, stuck to medicine, a family in want, hopes of good success under the royal patronage, and much of the same tenor. But Ṭelāl was not so easily to be blinkered, and kept to his first judgment. Meanwhile we passed down the street, lined with starers at the king and us, and at last arrived at the outer door of a large house near the farther end of the Sook or market-place; it belonged to Ḥasan, the merchant from Meshid 'Alee.

Three of the retinue stationed themselves by way of guard at the street door, sword in hand. The rest entered with the king and ourselves; we traversed the courtyard, where the remainder of the armed men took position, while we went on to the K'hāwah. It was small, but well furnished and carpeted. Here Ṭelāl placed us amicably by his side in the highest place; his brother Moḥammed and five or six others were admitted, and seated themselves each according to his rank, while Ḥasan, being master of the house, did the honours.

Coffee was brought and pipes lighted. Meantime Ebn-Rasheed renewed his interrogatory, skilfully throwing out side remarks, now on the government of Syria, now on that of Egypt, then on the Bedouins to the north of Djowf, or on the tribes of Ḥejāz or the banks of Euphrates, thus to gain light whence and to what end we had in fact come. Next he questioned us on medicine, perhaps to discover whether we had the right professional tone; then on horses, about which same noble animals we affected an ignorance unnatural and very unpardonable in an Englishman; but for which I hope afterwards to make amends to my readers. All was in vain; and after a full hour our noble friend had only managed by his cleverness to get himself

farther off the right track than he had been at the outset. He felt it, and determined to let matters have their own course, and to await the result of time. So he ended by assuring us of his entire confidence and protection, offering us to boot a lodging on the palace grounds. But this we declined, being desirous of studying the country as it was in itself, not through the medium of a court atmosphere; so we begged that an abode might be assigned us as near the market-place as possible: and this he promised, though evidently rather put out by our independent ways.

Excellent water-melons, ready peeled and cut up, with peaches hardly ripe, for it was the beginning of the season, were now brought in, and we all partook in common. This was the signal for breaking up; Ṭelāl renewed his proffers of favour and patronage; and we were at last reconducted to our lodgings by one of the royal guard.

Seyf now went in search of a permanent dwelling-place wherein to instal us; and before evening succeeded in finding one situated in a street leading at right angles to the market, and at no unreasonable distance from the palace. The house itself consisted of two apartments, separated by an unroofed court, with an outer door opening on the road; over the rooms was a flat roof surrounded by a very high parapet, thus making an excellent sleeping-place for summer. The locality had been occupied by one of the palace retinue, Koşeyn-el-Mişree, who at Seyf's bidding evacuated the premises in our favour, and moved off to take up his quarters in the neighbourhood. We examined the dwelling-place, and found it tolerably convenient; the rooms were each about sixteen feet in length by eight or nine in breadth, and of corresponding height; one of them might officiate as a store-room and kitchen, while the other should be fitted up for a dwelling apartment. It was the zenith of the dog-days, and a bedchamber would have been a mere superfluity; the roof and open air were every way preferable, nor had we to fear intrusion, the court-walls being sixteen feet high or more. Every door was provided with its own distinct lock; the keys here are made of iron, and in this respect Hā'yel has the better of any other Arab town it was my chance to visit, where the keys were invariably wooden, and thus very liable to break and get out of order.

Before nightfall we had transferred all our goods and chattels to our new abode, and taken leave of Seyf, who, sweetly smiling, informed us that whenever we chose to take our meals at the palace we should always find them ready, and that our present lodgings were entirely at the king's cost, whose guests we were accordingly to consider ourselves, however long our stay might prove. We begged him to express our gratitude to Ṭelāl, and once arrived "at home," shut the street door, and made sundry arrangements, the result of which shall be visible on the morrow.

Next morning, the 29th of July, about an hour after sunrise, the loiterers of the town—and they are numerous here as those who ever hung on the bridge at Coventry—had in us and our dwelling a new centre of curiosity and attraction. This was just what we wanted; so our outer door had been purposely left open, and the interior spectacle displayed to the delighted beholders.

' Round the walls of the courtyard and following the shade they afforded, we had arranged ends of carpet, empty saddle-bags, and the like, for the convenience of whoever might come to visit or consult the great doctor; I beg pardon of the medical faculty for my assumed title. The inner room on the left of the court had been decently carpeted, and there I sat in cross-legged state, with a pair of scales before me, a brass mortar, a glass ditto, and fifty or sixty boxes of drugs, with a small flanking line of bottles. Two Arab books of medical science by my side answered all the purposes of a diploma; of English or French "vade-mecums" I had but two, and they were concealed behind the cushion at the back, to be consulted in secret, if necessary. My companion, who did his best to look like a doctor's serving-man, sat outside near the door; his duty was to enquire of comers-in what they wanted, and to admit them one by one to the professional sanctuary. In the opposite room, to the right, a cauldron, a pile of wood, two or three melons, bread, dates, and so forth, promised something better than the purgatives and emetics on the left. We had, of course, put on our Sunday's best, that is, clean shirts, a more decent head-gear, and an upper garment or Combaz—Zaboon they here style it—in England it would pass for a flowered dressing-gown. Such was our appearance on setting



up business in Ḥā'yel, while we awaited the first onset of its custom.

Nor had we long to wait. The courtyard was soon thronged with visitors, some from the palace, others from the town. One had a sick relation, whom he begged us to come and see, another some personal ailment, a third had called out of mere politeness or curiosity ; in short, men of all conditions and of all ages, but for the most part open and friendly in manner, so that we could already anticipate a very speedy acquaintance with the town and whatever it contained.

The nature of our occupations now led to a certain daily routine, though it was often agreeably diversified by incidental occurrences. Perhaps a leaf taken at random from my journal, now regularly kept, may serve to set before my readers a tolerable sample of our ordinary course of life and society at Ḥā'yel, while it will at the same time give a more distinct idea of the town and people than we have yet supplied. It is, besides, a pleasure to retrace the memories of a pleasant time, and such on the whole was ours here ; and I trust that the reader will not be wholly devoid of some share in my feelings.

Be it, then, the 10th of August, whose jotted notes I will put together and fill up the blanks. I might equally have taken the 9th or the 11th, they are all much the same ; but the day I have chosen looks a little the closer written of the two, and for that sole reason I prefer giving it.

On that day, then, in 1862, about a fortnight after our establishment at Ḥā'yel, and when we were, in consequence, fully inured to our town existence, Seleem Abou Maḥmood-el'Eys and Barakāt-esh-Shāmee, that is, my companion and myself, rose, not from our beds, for we had none, but from our roof-spread carpets, and took advantage of the silent hour of the first faint dawn, while the stars yet kept watch in the sky over the slumbering inhabitants of Shomer, to leave the house for a cool and undisturbed walk ere the sun should arise and man go forth unto his work and to his labour. We locked the outer door, and then passed into the still twilight gloom down the cross-street leading to the market-place, which we next followed up to its farther or south-western end, where large folding-gates separate it from the rest of the town. The wolfish city-dogs, whose bark and bite too render walking the streets at night a

rather precarious business, now tamely stalked away in the gloaming, while here and there a crouching camel, the packages yet on his back, and his sleeping driver close by, awaited the opening of the warehouse at whose door they had passed the night. Early though it was, the market-gates were already unclosed, and the guardian sat wakeful in his niche. On leaving the market we had yet to go down a broad street of houses and gardens cheerfully intermixed, till at last we reached the western wall of the town, or, rather, of the new quarter added by 'Abd-Allah, where the high portal between round flanking towers gave us issue on the open plain, blown over at this hour by a light gale of life and coolness. To the west, but some four or five miles distant, rose the serrated mass of Djebel Shomer, throwing up its black fantastic peaks, now reddened by the reflected dawn, against the lead-blue sky. Northward the same chain bends round till it meets the town, and then stretches away for a length of ten or twelve days' journey, gradually losing in height on its approach to Meshid 'Alee and the valley of the Euphrates. On our south we have a little isolated knot of rocks, and far off the extreme ranges of Djebel Shomer or 'Āja', to give it its historical name, intersected by the broad passes that lead on in the same direction to Djebel Solma. Behind us lies the capital. Ṭelāl's palace, with its high oval keep, houses, gardens, walls, and towers, all coming out black against the ruddy bars of eastern light, and behind, a huge pyramidal peak almost overhanging the town, and connected by lower rocks with the main mountain range to north and south, those stony ribs that protect the central heart of the kingdom. In the plain itself we can just distinguish by the doubtful twilight several blackish patches irregularly scattered over its face, or seen as though leaning upward against its craggy verge; these are the gardens and country-houses of 'Obeyd and other chiefs, besides hamlets and villages, such as Kefar and 'Aḍwah, with their groves of palm and "Ithel" (the Arab larch), now blended in the dusk. One solitary traveller on his camel, a troop of jackals sneaking off to their rocky caverns, a few dingy tents of Shomer Bedouins, such are the last details of the landscape. Far away over the southern hills beams the glory of Canopus, and announces a new Arab year; the pole-star to the north lies low over the mountain tops.

We pace the pebble-strewn flat to the south, till we leave behind us the length of the town wall, and reach the little cluster of rocks already mentioned. We scramble up to a sort of niche near its summit, whence, at a height of a hundred feet or more, we can overlook the whole extent of the plain and wait the sunrise. Yet before the highest crags of Shomer are gilt with its first rays, or the long giant shadows of the easterly chain have crossed the level, we see groups of peasants, who drawing their fruit and vegetable-laden asses before them, issue like little bands of ants from the mountain gorges around, and slowly approach on the tracks converging to the capital. Horsemen from the town ride out to the gardens, and a long line of camels on the westerly Medinah road winds up towards Ḥā'yel. We wait ensconced in our rocky look-out and enjoy the view till the sun has risen, and the coolness of the night air warms rapidly into the sultry day; it is time to return. So we quit our solitary perch, and descend to the plain, where keeping in the shadow of the western fortifications we regain the town gate and thence the market. There all is now life and movement; some of the warehouses, filled with rice, flour, spices, or coffee, and often concealing in their inner recesses stores of the prohibited American weed, are already open; we salute the owners while we pass, and they return a polite and friendly greeting. Camels are unloading in the streets, and Bedouins standing by, looking anything but at home in the town. The shoemaker and the blacksmith, those two main props of Arab handicraft, are already at their work, and some gossiping bystanders are collected around them. At the corner where our cross-street falls into the market-place, three or four country women are seated, with piles of melons, gourds, egg-plant fruits, and the other garden produce before them for sale. My companion falls a haggling with one of these village nymphs, and ends by obtaining a dozen "badinjans" and a couple of water melons, each bigger than a man's head, for the equivalent of an English twopence. With this purchase we return home, where we shut and bolt the outer door, then take out of a flat basket what has remained from over night of our wafer-like Ḥā'yel bread, and with this and a melon make a hasty breakfast. I say a hasty one, for although it is only half an hour after sunrise, repeated knocks at our portal show the arrival of patients



and visitors : early rising being here the fashion, and reason must wherever artificial lighting is scanty. However, we do not at once open to our friends, nor will they take offence at the delay, but remain where they are chatting together before our door till we admit them; of so little value is time here. Our drink is water, for which we address ourselves to a goat-skin filled from the neighbouring well by Fatimah, daughter of our landlord Ḥasan-el-Miṣree, and suspended against the wall in the shady corner of the court. We untie its mouth where it hangs, and let out the contents into a very rude but strong brass cup of town manufacture, and with this teetotaller draught content ourselves. I hardly know why we had not yet begun at Ḥā'yel to make our own coffee; we became better house-keepers in the after course of the journey. We then arrange the carpets, and I retire to my doctoral seat within, taking care to have the scales and an Arab book in ostentatious evidence before me, while Barakāt-esh-Shāmee opens the entrance.

In comes a young man of good appearance, clad in the black cloak common to all of the middle or upper classes in Central Arabia; in his hand he bears a wand of the Sidr or lotos-wood. A silver-hilted sword and a glistening Kāfee'yah announce him to be a person of some importance, while his long black ringlets, handsome features and slightly olive complexion, with a tall stature and easy gait, declare him native of Djebel Shomer, and townsman of Ḥā'yel; it is 'Ojeyl, the eldest born of a large family, and successor to the comfortable house and garden of his father not long since deceased, in a quarter of the town some twenty minutes' walk distant. He leads by the hand his younger brother, a modest-looking lad of fair complexion and slim make, but almost blind, and evidently out of health also. After passing through the preliminary ceremonies of introduction to Barakāt, he approaches my recess, and standing without, salutes me with the greatest deference. Thinking him a desirable acquaintance, I receive him very graciously, and he begs me to see what is the matter with his brother. I examine the case, finding it to be within the limits of my skill, and not likely to require more than a very simple course of treatment. Accordingly I make my bargain for the chances of recovery, and find 'Ojeyl docile to the terms proposed, and with little disposition, all things considered, to backwardness



in payment. Arabs, indeed, are in general close in driving a bargain and open in downright giving; they will chaffer half a day about a penny, while they will throw away the worth of pounds on the first asker. But 'Ojeyl was one of the best specimens of the Ḥā'yel character, and of the clan Ṭā'i, renowned in all times for their liberal ways and high sense of honour. I next proceed to administer to my patient such drugs as his state requires, and he receives them with that air of absolute and half religious confidence which well-educated Arabs show to their physician, whom they regard as possessed of an almost sacred and supernatural power—a feeling, by the way, hardly less advantageous to the patient than to the practitioner, and which may often contribute much to the success of the treatment.

During the rest of my stay at Ḥā'yel, 'Ojeyl continued to be one of my best friends, I had almost said disciples; our mutual visits were frequent, and always pleasing and hearty. His brother's cure, which followed in less than a fortnight, confirmed his attachment, nor had I reason to complain of scantiness in his retribution.

Meanwhile the courtyard has become full of visitors. Close by my door I see the intelligent and demurely-smiling face of 'Abd-el-Maḥsin, where he sits between two pretty and well-dressed boys; they are the two elder children of Ṭelāl, Bedr and Bander; their guardsman, a negro slave with a handsome cloak and sword, is seated a little lower down. Farther on are two townsmen, one armed, the other with a wand at his side. A rough good-natured youth of a bronzed complexion, and whose dingy clothes bespeak his mechanical profession, is talking with another of a dress somewhat different in form and coarser in material than that usually worn in Ḥā'yel; this latter must be a peasant from some one of the mountain villages. Two Bedouins, ragged and uncouth, have straggled in with the rest; while a tall dark-featured youth, with a gilded hilt to his sword, and more silk about him than a Wahnābee would approve, has taken his place opposite to 'Abd-el-Maḥsin, and is trying to draw him into conversation. But this last has asked Barakāt to lend him one of my Arabic books to read, and is deeply engaged in its perusal.

'Ojeyl has taken leave, and I give the next turn of course to

'Abd-el-Maḥsin. He informs me that Ṭelāl has sent me his two sons Bedr and Bander that I may examine their state of health, and see if they require doctoring. This is in truth a little stroke of policy on Ṭelāl's part, who knows equally with myself that the boys are perfectly well and want nothing at all. But he wishes to give us a mark of his confidence, and at the same time to help us in establishing our medical reputation in the town; for though by no means himself persuaded of the reality of our doctoral title, he understands the expediency of saving appearances before the public.

Well, the children are passed in review with all the seriousness due to a case of heart-complaint or brain-fever, while at a wink from me, Barakāt prepares in the kitchen a draught of cinnamon water, which with sugar, named medicine for the occasion, pleases the young heirs of royalty and keeps up the farce; 'Abd-el-Maḥsin expatiating all the time to the bystanders on the wonderful skill with which I have at once discovered the ailments and their cure, and the small boys thinking that if this be medicine, they will do their best to be ill for it every day.

'Abd-el-Maḥsin now commits them to the negro, who, however, before taking them back to the palace, has his own story to tell of some personal ache, for which I prescribe without stipulating for payment, since he belongs to the palace, where it is important to have the greatest number of friends possible, even on the back-stairs. But 'Abd-el-Maḥsin remains, reading, chatting, quoting poetry, and talking history, recent events, natural philosophy, or medicine, as the case may be.

Let us now see some of the other patients. The gold-hilted swordsman has naturally a special claim on our attention. It is the son of Rosheyd, Ṭelāl's maternal uncle. His palace stands on the other side of the way, exactly opposite to our house; and I will say nothing more of him for the present, intending to pay him afterwards a special visit, and thus become more thoroughly acquainted with the whole family.

Next let us take notice of those two townsmen who are conversing, or rather "chaffing," together. Though both in plain apparel, and much alike in stature and features, there is yet much about them to distinguish the two; one has a civilian look, the other a military. He of the wand is no less a personage than Moḥammed-el-Kāḏee, chief justice of Hā'yel,

and of course a very important individual in the town. However his exterior is that of an elderly unpretentious little man, and one, in spite of the proverb which attributes gravity to judges, very fond of a joke, besides being a tolerable representative of what may here be called the moderate party, neither participating in the fanaticism of the Wahhābee, nor yet, like the most of the indigenous chiefs, hostile to Mahometanism; he takes his cue from the court direction, and is popular with all factions because belonging properly to none.

He requires some medical treatment for himself, and more for his son, a big heavy lad with a swollen arm, who has accompanied him hither. Here too is a useful acquaintance, well up to all the scandal and small talk of the town, and willing to communicate it. Our visits were frequent, and I found his house well stored with books, partly manuscript, partly printed in Egypt, and mainly on legal or religious subjects. Among those of the latter description were, by way of example, a collection of Khoṭbahs or sermons for all the Fridays in the year. Moḥammed was a great talker, and exercised on all matters a freedom of remark common though not peculiar to men of the legal profession; he became in short our "daily news" for court intrigue and city gossip, what had been said in public, and what done in private, who ran away with whom, and so forth. Yet on the whole the portrait he thus laid before us of Ḥā'yel and its inhabitants, noble or commoners, was a favourable one, more so perhaps than could be in justice given of most capitals. This might be the result of the character of those tribes who, as Arab annals have it, coalesced into the present population, namely, Ṭā'i and Wā'il, with their kindred clans, and who were, so fame assures us, the flower of Arab enterprise and generosity, the most affable in peace, the most daring in war, and the most honourable at all times amid the inhabitants of Nejed and Upper Arabia. In later ages the civilization of town-life has cast an agreeable varnish over their rougher qualities, while that civilization itself is of too simple a character to render them artificial or corrupt.

Of the country folks in the villages around, like Mogah, Delhemee'eh, and the rest, Moḥammed-el-Ḳāḍee used to speak with a sort of half-contemptuous pity, much like a Parisian talking of Low Bretons; in fact, the difference between these

rough and sturdy boors, and the more refined inhabitants of the capital, is, all due proportion allowed, no less remarkable here than in Europe itself. We will now let one of them come forward in his own behalf, and my readers shall be judges.

It is accordingly a stout clown from Mogah, scantily dressed in working wear, and who has been occupied for the last half-hour in tracing sundry diagrams on the ground before him with a thick peach-tree switch, thus to pass his time till his betters shall have been served. He now edges forward, and taking his seat in front of the door, calls my attention with an "I say, doctor." Whereon I suggest to him that his bulky corporation not being formed of glass or any other transparent material, he has by his position entirely intercepted whatever little light my recess might enjoy. He apologizes, and shuffles an inch or two sideways. Next I enquire what ails him, not without some curiosity to hear the answer, so little does the herculean frame before me announce disease. Whereunto Do'eymis, or whatever may be his name, replies, "I say, I am all made up of pain." This statement, like many others, appears to me rather too general to be exactly true. So I proceed in my interrogatory: "Does your head pain you?" "No." (I might have guessed that; these fellows never feel what our cross-Channel friends entitle "*le mal des beaux esprits*.") "Does your back ache?" "No." "Your arms?" "No." "Your legs?" "No." "Your body?" "No." "But," I conclude, "if neither your head nor your body, back, arms, or legs pain you, how can you possibly be such a composition of suffering?" "I am all made up of pain, doctor," replies he, manfully intrenching himself within his first position. The fact is, that there is really something wrong with him, but he does not know how to localize his sensations. So I push forward my enquiries, till it appears that our man of Mogah has a chronic rheumatism; and on ulterior investigation, conducted with all the skill that Barakāt and I can jointly muster, it comes out that three or four months before he had an attack of the disease in its acute form, accompanied by high fever, since which he has never been himself again.

This might suffice for the diagnosis, but I wish to see how he will find his way out of more intricate questions; besides, the townsmen sitting by, and equally alive to the joke with myself,



whisper "Try him again." In consequence, I proceed with "What was the cause of your first illness?" "I say, doctor, its cause was God," replies the patient. "No doubt of that," say I; "all things are caused by God: but what was the particular and immediate occasion?" "Doctor, its cause was God, and, secondly, that I ate camel's flesh when I was cold," rejoins my scientific friend. "But was there nothing else?" I suggest, not quite satisfied with the lucid explanation just given. "Then, too, I drank camel's milk; but it was all, I say, from God, doctor," answers he.

Well, I consider the case, and make up my mind regarding the treatment. Next comes the grand question of payment, which must be agreed on beforehand, and rendered conditional on success; else no fees for the doctor, not at Ḥā'yel only, but throughout Arabia. I enquire what he will give me on recovery. "Doctor," answers the peasant, "I will give you, do you hear? I say, I will give you a camel." But I reply that I do not want one. "I say, remember God," which being interpreted here means, "do not be unreasonable; I will give you a fat camel, every one knows my camel; if you choose, I will bring witnesses, I say." And while I persist in refusing the proffered camel, he talks of butter, meal, dates, and such-like equivalents.

There is a patient and a paymaster for you. However, all ends by his behaving reasonably enough; he follows my prescriptions with the ordinary docility, gets better, and gives me for my pains an eighteenpenny fee.

So pass two or three hours, during which the remaining visitors already mentioned take each their turn, others come and go, and the sun nears the zenith. For brevity's sake, I pass on at once to the mechanic, who, after long waiting in the shade with genuine Arab patience, now advances, and with a good-natured grin on his broad features begs me to accompany him to his house, where his brother is lying ill of a fever. After a short conversation, I direct Barakāt to stay at home till my return, and gratify my petitioner by consenting to his invitation.

Small of stature, dusky in complexion, strongly built, and with a sly expression about his face which resembles almost strikingly that of Murillo's Spanish beggar-boy, Doheym

(literally "black," ) may stand for a not unfair specimen of a large class among the Central Nejdean population. Partly from a desire of increasing gain, partly from dislike to Wahhābee puritanism, his family has not long since emigrated northward from Kāseem to Hā'yel, where they have fixed their residence, but still retain many of the distinctive ways and habits of their native district. Such immigrations have of late become very common, and have greatly contributed to the numerical and military strength of Djebel Shomer, while they add much to its industrial and commercial prosperity. My readers will perhaps call to mind Louis XIV and the repeal of the Nantes edict, and add one parallel more between Arabia and Europe. For the civilization of Kāseem is of ancient date, and its inhabitants possess traditional skill in all kinds of handicraft and trade, far superior to anything found among the recently organized tribes of the north, while the memories of former independence, protracted wars and victories, have given to their character a steadiness and resolution in all their undertakings very unlike the unsustained though dashing bravery of the north, formed in brief forays and in Bedouin feuds. The good-natured and social disposition common to Arabs in general has been also fostered among them by centuries of city and town life till it occasionally attains the level of sprightliness, while it bestows on them a more decided turn of ease and urbanity in their conversation than is general in Shomer and its dependencies. It is natural enough that such men should for the most succeed well in obtaining easy admittance and speedy success in a strange land, though they readily after a short sojourn avail themselves of any good opportunity for returning to their native country, a land favoured both by nature and art much more than the stony precincts of Hā'yel and the rough sierras of Sulma and 'Āja'.

Doheym takes up his thin black cloak, and wraps it round him in folds that a sculptor might admire, and out we set together. As we go on to the Sook, he nods and smiles to some fifty acquaintances, or stops a moment to interchange a few words with those of his own land. The market-place is now crowded from end to end; townsmen, villagers, Bedouins, some seated at the doors of the warehouses and driving a bargain with the owners inside, some gathered in idle groups, gossiping

over the news of the hour: for the tongue is here what the printed paper is in Europe.

Groups of lading and unlading camels block up the path; I look right and left; there within the shops I see one merchant laboriously summing up his accounts (I know not how the Arabs of old times were ever good mathematicians, certainly at present a simple reckoning of addition poses nine out of the ten); another, for want of customers, is reading in some old dog-eared manuscript of prayers, or of natural history, or of geography—such geography! where almost all the world except Arabia is filled up with “Anthropophagi and men whose heads do grow beneath their shoulders.” The Coran is little dealt in here, but the Shiya’ees of Meshid ’Alee may perchance have in their hands some small illuminated treatise on the imaginary excellencies of ’Alee or one of his family, or very likely a somewhat unscriptural, or more truly antiscritptural narrative of the amours of Joseph with Zuleykha, Potiphar’s traditionary wife; or the history of David’s frailties, wherein the monarch’s fault is made to consist not, as some innocently suppose, in taking his neighbour’s wife, but in the extravagance of adding a hundredth to the ninety-nine he is supposed to have already, but lawfully, possessed,—and suchlike edifying tales.

Mixed with the city crowd, swordsmen and gaily-dressed negroes, for the negro is always a dandy when he can afford it, belonging mostly to the palace, are now going about their affairs; the well-dressed chieftain and noble jostles on amid the plebeian crowd on terms of astounding familiarity, and elbows or is elbowed by the artisan and the porter; while the court officers themselves meet with that degree of respect alone which indicates deference rather than inferiority in those who pay it. A gay and busy scene; the morning air in the streets yet retains just sufficient coolness to render tolerable the bright rays of the sun, and everywhere is that atmosphere of peace, security, and thriving known to the visitors of Inner Arabia, but less familiar to the Syrian or Anatolian traveller. Should you listen to the hum of discourse around, you will seldom hear a curse, an imprecation, or a quarrel, but much business, repartee, and laughter. Doheym and I slowly pick out our way through the crowd amid many greetings on either hand, till we reach the open space of the palace court where the Sook



falls into it ; and thence we pass through the high gateway, and enter the main artery of the town.

It is a broad and level road, having on its left the walls of the palace gardens, overtopped here and there by young date trees, for this plantation is quite recent, and the work of the present reign only ; on its right a succession of houses, scattered among gardens of older growth and denser vegetation ; the trees overhang the walls, and we are glad to avail ourselves of their deep dark shade. Doheym entertains me with descriptions of Nejed and Kaseem, and extols in no measured terms the land of his birth ; he has seen too the Wahhābee monarch in person, though not in Ri'ad his capital. Thus we beguile a quarter of an hour's leisurely walk (it were superfluous to say that no one hurries his pace in these semi-tropical regions, especially in the month of August), till we reach an open space behind the palace garden, where a large and deep excavation announces the Maslakhah, or slaughter-house (literally "skinning-place") of the town butchers. In any other climate such an establishment would be an intolerable nuisance to all neighbours if thus placed within the city limits, and right in the centre of gardens and habitations. But here the dryness of the atmosphere is such that no ill consequence follows ; putrefaction being effectually anticipated by the parching influence of the air, which renders a carcass of three or four days' standing as inoffensive to the nose as a leather drum ; and one may pass leisurely by a recently deceased camel on the road-side, and almost take it for a specimen prepared with arsenic and spirits for an anatomical museum.

At this point the street leads off to the interior of the capital. The part hitherto traversed on our walk is the new quarter, and dates almost entirely from the accession of the actual dynasty ; but now we are to enter on the original town of Hā'yel, where everything announces considerable though not remote antiquity. The two main quarters which form the old city are divided by a long road, narrower and less regular than that we have yet followed. Nor was this line of demarcation more to indicate a division of the buildings than of the inhabitants, split up as they formerly were by civil and internecine hostility. But to this the strong hand of Ebn-Rasheed has at last put an end. Right and left crossways, branching out off the main path, lead



to side streets and lesser subdivisions. We take a very narrow and winding lane on the right, by which Doheym leads me awhile through a labyrinth of gardens, wells, and old irregular houses, till we reach a cluster of buildings, and a covered gallery, conducting us through its darkness to the sun-glare of a broad road, bordered by houses on either side, though a low court wall and outer door generally intervenes between them and the street itself. The arch is here unknown, and the portals are all of timber-work enclosed in brick, and equally rough and solid in construction. My guide stops before one such and knocks. "Samm'" ("come in") is heard from within, and immediately afterwards some one comes up and draws back the inner bolt. We now stand in a courtyard, where two or three small furnaces, old metal pots and pans of various sizes, some enormously big—for the Arabs pique themselves now, like their ancestors of two thousand years since, in having cauldrons large enough to boil an entire sheep—sheets of copper, bars of iron, and similar objects, proclaim an Arab smithy. Some brawny, half-naked youths covered with soot and grime come up to present a shake of their unwashed hands, while they exchange Nejdean jokes with Doheym. His elder brother So'eyd, whose gravity as head of the family has been a little ruffled by the sportiveness of his younger relatives, rebukes the juveniles, hastens to purify his own face and hands, and then introduces me to the interior of the house, where in a darkened room lies another brother, the sick man on whose behalf I have been summoned; he is in a high fever and hardly able to speak, though there is fortunately no immediate danger. I take my seat by the patient and address a few preliminary questions to the bystanders, intermixed with hopeful prognostics, while the sick man tries to look cheerful, and shows that he expected my coming to see him, and is pleased at it. To put out the tongue even unasked, and to hold forth the hand that the doctor may feel the pulse, are customary proceedings here; but if you do not wish to pass for an ignoramus, you must successively try both wrists, either radial being supposed entirely independent of its fellow, and each with a separate story to tell; whence my readers may deduce that the real theory of the circulation of the blood is equally unknown with the name of Harvey. When I have

played my part, the elder brother takes me aside and enquires about the diagnosis and prognosis, or, in plain English, what is the matter, and what may be the consequences. On my guarded reply, he promises compliance with whatever I may prescribe, and then invites me to sit down and take coffee before any further doctorings. I show a desire of at once getting things in order for the patient, but the patient himself in a low voice, eked out with sighs, indicates his wish that I should first and foremost partake of their hospitality. Were he actually dying I doubt whether matters could hold another course in these countries. So dates are brought, pipes are lighted, Doheym prepares coffee, and the room in which (mind you) the sick man is lying, fills with visitors. Seclusion makes no part of Arab treatment; on the contrary it is considered almost a sacred duty to visit and enliven the sufferer by the most numerous and the most varied society that can be got together. The Arab invalid himself has no idea of being left alone; to be kept in company is all his desire; nay, the same system is observed even when death occurs in a family, and the survivor's nearest of kin, son, wife, or husband, keep open house for many days after in order to receive the greatest amount of consolatory calls possible, so that the solitude of woe has few advocates here.

In Doheym's house the visitors are mainly natives of Ḳaseem, or Upper Nejed. It was easy to perceive from their bearing and from the tone of their conversation that the inhabitants of the above-named provinces were no less superior to those of Djebel Shomer in whatever is understood by civilization and general culture, than the Shomerites to those of Djowf, or the people of Djowf to the Bedouins. Indeed, if my readers will draw a diagonal line across the map of Arabia from north-west to south-east, following the direction of my actual journey through that country, and then distinguish the several regions of the peninsula by belts of colour brightening while they represent the respective degrees of advancement in arts, commerce, and their kindred acquirements, on the Dupin system, they will have for the darkest line that nearest to the north, or Wadi Serḥān, while the Djowf, Djebel Shomer, Nejed, Ḥaṣa, and their dependencies, grow lighter in succession more and more, till the belt corresponding to 'Omān should show the

cheerfullest tint of all. In fact, it is principally owing to the circumstance that the northern and western parts of Arabia have been hitherto those almost exclusively visited by travellers, that the idea of Arab barbarism or Bedouinism has found such general acceptance in Europe.

Here we are now in Ḥā'yel, yet in the midst of Nejdean politics and debate, where the bigotry and tyranny of the Wahhābee meet with oft-recurring and cordial detestation. The siege of 'Oneyzah, its latest news, conjectures, hopes and fears relative to its duration and result, are the chief topic of conversation. Already, indeed, when hardly beyond the boundaries of the Djowf, had we heard of that great event of the Arabian day. But here it was the all-engrossing subject of anxious enquiry and speculation, and the real though disguised cause of the frequent visits paid by the chiefs of Ḳaseem to Ṭelāl, and of their endless rendezvous in the apartments of 'Abd-el-Maḥsin.

That large town had been for centuries the capital of the province, or rather of a full third of Arabia, namely, of what we may call its north-western centre. Its commerce with Medinah and Mecca on the one hand, and with Nejed, nay, even with Damascus and Bagdad, on the other, had gathered in its warehouses stores of traffic unknown to any other locality of inner Arabia, and its hardy merchants were met with alike on the shores of the Red Sea and of the Persian Gulf, and occasionally on the more distant banks of the Euphrates, or by the waters of Damascus. Meanwhile the martial and energetic character of its population prevented a too exclusive predominance of the commercial over the military spirit, and the warriors of 'Oneyzah had twice at a recent period been seen beneath the walls of Bahholah in the very heart of 'Omān, though separated from them by three months' distance of Arab march. 'Oneyzah itself boasted a double enclosure of fortifications, unbaked brickwork it is true, but in their height and thickness no less formidable to Arab besiegers in their present state of obsidionary science, than the defences of Antwerp or of Badajoz to a European army. The outer circle of walls, with its trench and towers, protected the gardens, while the inner range surrounded the compact mass of the town itself. Here a young and courageous chief Zāmil, or, to give him the name by which

he is often familiarly styled, Zoweymil-el-'Āṭeeyah, 'was adored by his fellow-citizens and subjects for his gentleness and liberality in peace, and his daring in war. It was this chief who now held 'Oneyzah against the troops of Feysul, reigning monarch of the Wakhābee or Ebn-Sa'ood dynasty. Such was the position of affairs in August 1862; the rest of my stay in Arabia exactly coincided with the continuation and catastrophe of this bloody drama, of which I was in part rendered by circumstances a very unwilling eyewitness.

We left Doheym and his friends or relatives in earnest discussion of these topics. However, their conversational powers were nowise confined to war and politics; medicine and surgery (for the Arabs hardly distinguish the one from the other, whether in theory or practice; indeed, their favourite remedy or panacea, the actual cautery, belongs rather to the latter than the former) were often brought on the carpet, and I was pleased to find my Kaseem acquaintances speak on these matters with much good sense, all due allowances made, and even with some slight tinge of experience. Many plants that grow hereabouts possess some medicinal virtue, tonic, sedative, or narcotic, and are occasionally employed by the more knowing inhabitants. The use, too, of fomentations and other external remedies or palliatives is not entirely beyond their skill, and natural quickness may and does fill up to a certain measure the deficiencies of theoretical ignorance.

An hour wears away in agreeable and lively talk. Some other patients are offered to my care, and visits are arranged, till, after suitable prescriptions for the invalid, I rise to take my leave. Doheym's eldest brother offers to accompany me to some of the neighbouring houses, where he expects that mutual advantage may be derived for the sick and for the doctor.

This part of the town is composed of large groups or islands of houses, arranged with some approach to regularity amid gardens and wells: but it possesses neither market nor mosque, an additional evidence of the prevailing want of organization before the Ebn-Rasheed dynasty. The streets or lanes are cleaner than I had expected to find them, but this is due in part to the remarkable dryness of the climate. We stroll about here and there, sometimes drawing near to the high craggy rock



that overhangs the eastern town wall, sometimes winding through the groves that border the inner line of the southern fortifications, till noon is past, and the heat renders further walking unadvisable. So'eyd reconducts me to the main road, and there quits me with a promise to send Doheym in the evening to inform me of the state of my patient.

I now return homewards alone; the streets and the market are nearly solitary; the small black shadows lie close gathered up at the stems of the palm-trees or under the walls, everything sleeps under the heavy glare of noon. Perhaps, instead of going on directly to our domicile, curiosity and the pleasure of being alone leads me on some minutes farther up to the western gate, thence to look out on the great plain between Hā'yel and the mountain. That plain now appears transformed into one wide lake, whose waters seem to bathe the rocky verge of Shomer, while nearer to the town they fade into deceptive pools and shallows; it is the every-day illusion of the mirage. If we return when the meridian heat is passing away, we may see the fairy lake shrunk up to a distant pond, and before evening it will quite disappear, to return next day an hour or two before noon. Meanwhile this semblance of water, "the eye of the landscape," as the Arabs not inappropriately call that element, renders the view, which would else be too arid and rough, very lovely. Were it but real!

After feasting my gaze on this beautiful though now familiar phenomenon, I regain our dwelling. Barakāt and myself make our dinner, and talk over the visits and affairs of the morning. We have then two hours or so of quiet before us, for it is seldom that any one calls at this period of the day, hardly less a siesta here than in Italy or Spain. At last the 'Asr approaches, a division of time well known in the East, but for which European languages have no corresponding name; it begins from the moment when the sun has reached half-way in his declining course, and continues till about an hour and a half or rather less before his setting. We now leave the house together, and direct our steps towards the palace by a cross-way leading between the dwellings of some court retainers and an angle of the great mosque. In this latter there will generally be a decent number of worshippers for the Salāt-el-'Asr, or afternoon prayers, especially since this is the hour chosen by

Telāl and Zāmil out of the five legal periods for performing their devotions in public, though even then they are not unfrequently absent. These prayers are invariably followed by the reading aloud of a chapter or section selected from some traditional work, and to this often succeeds a short extemporary sermon or commentary on what has been read.

Concerning the ceremonies of the prayer itself—though slightly different among the Ḥambelees and Mālekees of Central Arabia, from those in fashion with the Wāhhābees, on the one hand, and from what is generally observed among the Shāfi'ees and Ḥaneefees more frequently met with in Syria or in Turkey, on the other—I will not here detain my reader. For a correct idea of Mahometan worship in its ordinary form, I would beg leave to refer such as desire it to the third chapter of Lane's *Egypt*, where they will find whatever instruction they may need on this and on analogous subjects given in clear and interesting detail, and with incomparable accuracy upon all points.

When prayer is over, about half the congregation rise and depart. Those who remain in the mosque draw together near the centre of the large and simple edifice, and seat themselves on its pebble-strewn floor, circle within circle; some lean their backs against the rough square pillars, I might better call them piers, that support the roof, some play with the staff or riding-switch in their hands. In the midmost of the assembly a person selected as reader, but neither Imām nor Khaṭeeb, who is supposed to be better acquainted with letters than are the average of his countrymen, besides being gifted with a good and sonorous voice, holds on his knees a large manuscript, which might be an object of much curiosity at Berlin or Paris; it contains the traditions of the prophet, or the lives of his companions, or perhaps El-Bokhāree's commentaries, or something else of the kind. Out of this he reads in a clear but somewhat monotonous tone, accompanying each word by an inflexion and accentuation worthy of Sibawee'yah or Kosey', and hardly to be attained by the best professional grammarian of Syria or Cairo. And reason clear; here it is nature, there art. This kind of lecture lasts ordinarily from ten minutes to a quarter of an hour, and is listened to in decorous silence, while all who have any pretensions to religious feeling, and

these form 'of course a large proportion of those present on such occasions, look down on the ground, or fix their eyes on the reader and his volume. Others, of a less serious turn of mind, and the younger auditors, put themselves at their ease ; and others, again, whisper sceptical criticism to their neighbours, or interchange glances of sarcasm at the recital of some portentous exploit, or totally incredible vision. I regret to say that Ṭelāl himself, when he honoured these meetings with his presence, set invariably a very bad example of attention, giving the time to studying the faces of the congregation, and showing by the expression of his quick-glancing eye, that his thoughts were much more occupied by questions of actual life and politics, than by the wise sayings of the Prophet, or the glorious achievements of his companions.

If the prince were in the mosque his custom was after about ten minutes' patience to give the reader a sign that he had had enough of it, on which the latter would close his book, and the assembly break up without further ceremony. But if the prince were absent, the reader's place would be taken by one of the elder and more respectable individuals belonging to the semi-literary semi-religious class, or by the Imām or the Khaṭeeb himself, who would then give a short verbal explanation of the chapter just read, or at times an extemporary sermon, but sitting, and in a familiar way. I have often heard much good sense and practical morality enounced on these occasions both here and in Ḳaseem.

When the reading, or the reading and sermon together, are concluded, every one would remain seated in silence for a minute or so, partly as though to reflect on what they had heard, and partly to give the more important personages present free time to retire before the press of the throng. Ṭelāl would naturally be the first to rise and leave the building, accompanied by Zāmil and his brothers or 'Abd-el-Maḥsin, and take his place on a stone bench in the courtyard without, there to hold a short afternoon audience. On this occasion minor causes, and whatever had not been deemed of sufficient importance to occupy the morning hours, would often be discussed ; and Ṭelāl himself would occasionally relax into a condescending smile when some Bedouin presented his uncouth complaint, or two townsmen, guilty of having called each other hard names,



were brought into his presence. I was more than once an amused spectator of these scenes; Telāl's manner was concise and sarcastic; the decision very frequently to administer a few stripes, nowise severe ones, to both parties; the royal judge wisely observing that insult was almost always the offspring of provocation, and that where the fault was equally divided, the punishment should be so too. But it was a very mild one; a Charterhouse boy in my time (1838-44) might have thought himself lucky had three marks in the Black Book brought him no more from the dreaded head-master of our day.

We now mix with the crowd; sometimes 'Abd-el-Maḥsin would single us out, and enter into deep discussion of Arab literature and history; or a friend from among the townsmen, often one of the younger chiefs who had become in a certain way our clients and companions, would invite us to peaches and dates, with a cup of that coffee which Arabia alone can afford, in his father's or uncle's house.

Of dinners or suppers, for either name may suit the evening meal, I have already spoken at sufficient length, and need not here go through the scene again. *Ex uno disce omnes*, at least in what regards the comestibles through the whole of inner Arabia from the Djowf to the neighbourhood of Ri'ād. Never had a nation less idea of cookery than the Arabs; in this science, anyhow, Turks, Persians, and Indians leave them immeasurably behind; they know no more of it in truth than just enough to bring them within the "cooking animal" definition of man. Rice and boiled mutton, all piled in one large dish, a little indifferent bread, dates, perhaps a hard-boiled egg or two, hashed gourds or something of the kind for garnish; the monarch of all Shomer cum Djowf and Kheybar has no more at his table. Wash your hands, say Bismillah (unless you desire to pass for an atheist), fall to, eat as fast as though you were afraid that the supper would run away, then say, "El ḥamdu l'illāh," or "thanks to God," with an added compliment to your host if you wish to be polite, wash your hands again, with soap or with potash, for sometimes the one will be brought you and sometimes the other, and all is over as far as the meal is concerned. You have smoked a pipe or two and drunk three or four cups of coffee before supper; you



may now smoke and drink one only, for that is the etiquette after eating, and then wish your friends good evening and go away.

Rosheyd, Ṭelāl's maternal uncle, and our next-door neighbour, as I have before mentioned, invited us not unfrequently to his house. He was a rather shrewd, amusing, but very superficial character, proud of his knowledge of foreign lands, having travelled farther than almost any other man in Ḥā'yel. He had even reached Kerkook, seven days' journey north of Bagdad, and was besides no stranger to Egypt, both Upper and Lower. Like too many travellers of more cultivated races, he had managed to see the outside of everything and the inside of nothing, and would spin long yarns of grotesque adventures and exotic singularities, much reminding one of the way in which men are apt to talk of other countries than their own when they have visited them without previous knowledge of language, history, and manners. But his heart was better than his head, and if not a wise he was at least a kind and steady friend.

Doḥey's invitations were particularly welcome, both from the pleasantness of his dwelling-place, and from the varied and interesting conversation that I was sure to meet with there. This merchant, a tall and stately man of between fifty and sixty years of age, and whose thin features were lighted up by a lustre of more than ordinary intelligence, was a thorough Ḥā'yelite of the old caste, hating Wahhābees from the bottom of his heart, eager for information on cause and effect, on lands and governments, and holding commerce and social life for the main props if not the ends of civil and national organization. His uncle, now near eighty years old, to judge by conjecture in a land where registers are not much in use, had journeyed to India, and traded at Bombay; in token whereof he still wore an Indian skull-cap and a Cachemire shawl. The rest of the family were in keeping with the elder members, and seldom have I seen more dutiful children or a better educated household. My readers will naturally understand that by education I here imply its moral not its intellectual phase. The eldest son, himself a middle-aged man, would never venture into his father's presence without unbuckling his sword and leaving it in the vestibule,

nor on any account presume to sit on a level with him or by his side in the divan.

The divan itself was one of the prettiest I met with in these parts. It was a large square room, looking out on the large house-garden, and cheerfully lighted up by trellised windows on two sides, while the wall of the third had purposely been discontinued at about half its height, and the open space thus left between it and the roof propped by pillars, between which "a fruitful vine by the sides of the house" was intertwined so as to fill up the interval with a gay network of green leaves and tendrils, transparent like stained glass in the eastern sunbeams. Facing this cheerful light the floor of the apartment was raised about two feet above the rest, and covered with gay Persian carpets, silk cushions, and the best of Arab furniture. In the lower half of the K'hāwah, and at its farthest angle, was the small stone coffee-stove, placed at a distance where its heat might not annoy the master and his guests. Many of the city nobility would here resort, and the talk generally turned on serious subjects, and above all on the parties and politics of Arabia; while Doḥey' would show himself a thorough Arab patriot, and at the same time a courteous and indulgent judge of foreigners, qualities seldom to be met with together in any notable degree, and therefore more welcome.

Many a pleasant hour have I passed in this half greenhouse, half K'hāwah, amid cheerful faces and varied talk, while inly commenting on the natural resources of this manly and vigorous people, and straining the eye of forethought to discern through the misty curtain of the future by what outlet their now unfruitful because solitary good may be brought into fertilizing contact with that of other more advanced nations, to the mutual benefit of each and all.

Talk went on with the ease and decorum characteristic of good Eastern society, without the flippancy and excitement which occasionally mars it in some countries, no less than over-silence does in others. To my mind the Easterns are generally superior in the science of conversation to the inhabitants of the West; perhaps from a greater necessity of cultivating it, as the only means of general news and intercourse where newspapers and pamphlets are unknown.

Or else some garden was the scene of our afternoon leisure,

among fruit-trees and palms, by the side of a watercourse, whose constant supply from the well hid from view among thick foliage, seemed the work not of laborious art but of unassisted nature. Here, stretched in the cool and welcome shade, would we for hours canvass with 'Abd-el-Maḥsin, and others of similar pursuits, the respective merits of Arab poets and authors, of Omar-ebn-el-Fāriḍ or Aboo'l 'Ola, in meetings that had something of the Attic, yet with just enough of the Arab to render them more acceptable by their Semitic character of grave cheerfulness and mirthful composure.

Or when the stars came out, Barakāt and myself would stroll out of the heated air of the streets and market to the cool open plain, and there pass an hour or two alone, or in conversation with what chance passer-by might steal on us half unperceived and unperceiving in the dusk, and amuse ourselves with his simplicity if he were a Bedouin, or with his shrewdness if a townsman.

Thus passed our ordinary life at Ḥā'yel. Many minor incidents occurred to diversify it, many of the little ups and downs that human intercourse never fails to furnish; sometimes the number of patients and the urgency of their attendance allowed of little leisure for aught except our professional duties; sometimes a day or two would pass with hardly any serious occupation. But of such incidents my readers have a sufficient sample in what has been already set down. Suffice to say, that from the 27th of July to the 8th of September we remained doctoring in the capital or in its immediate neighbourhood.

By this time we had obtained sufficient knowledge of the Shomer capital and its denizens, while far the greater part of our journey lay yet before us, and the autumn was already drawing on. Besides, any notable prolongation of our stay at Ḥā'yel might be dangerous both for ourselves and for Ṭelāl; we were watched by the spies of 'Obeyd and Feṣṣul, and so was the monarch also. The Bagdad merchants, too, who formed a numerous and not uninfluential body in the town, looked on us with positive dislike, supposing us in reality Damascenes, for whom the Shiy'aees bear an especial and hereditary hatred, that twelve centuries have rather increased than diminished. Accordingly, though in most respects so dissident from the Wahnābee sectarians, they now sided with them in one thing,



and that was in giving us askance looks of no friendly import, and in saying of us all the harm imaginable, whenever they could safely do so, I mean among themselves and behind our backs. Moreover, my stock of remedies was limited, and I had cause to fear lest too much expenditure of them in one place might barely leave us enough to suffice for the practice awaiting us in the rest of our long journey. Now the journey across the Shomer frontier could only be pursued with Ṭelāl's cognizance, and by his good will. In fact, a passport bearing the royal signature is indispensable for all who desire to cross the boundary, especially into the Wahnābee territory; without such a document in hand no one would venture to conduct us.

Accordingly we requested and obtained a special audience at the palace. Ṭelāl, of whose goodwill we had received frequent, indeed daily proofs during our sojourn at Ḥā'yel, proved a sincere friend—patron would be a juster word—to the last; exemplifying the Scotch proverb about the guest not only who "will stay," but also who "maun gang." To this end he then dictated to Zāmil, for Ṭelāl himself is no scribe, a passport or general letter of safe conduct, enough to ensure us good treatment within the limits of his rule, and even beyond. I subjoin the translation for the benefit of the Foreign Office and all therein employed.

"In the name of God the Merciful, we, Ṭelāl-ebn-Rasheed, to all dependent on Shomer who may see this, peace be with you and the mercy of God. Next, we inform you that the bearers of this paper are Seleem-el'Eyṣ-Abou-Maḥmood and his associate Barakāt, physicians, seeking their livelihood by doctoring, with the help of God, and journeying under our protection, so let no one interfere with or annoy them, and peace be with you." Here followed the date.

When this was written, Ṭelāl affixed his seal, and rose to leave us alone with Zāmil, after a parting shake of the hand, and wishing us a prosperous journey and speedy return. Yet with all these motives for going, I could not but feel reluctant to quit a pleasing town, where we certainly possessed many sincere friends and well-wishers, for countries in which we could by no means anticipate equal favour or even equal safety. Indeed, so ominous was all that we heard about



Wahhābee Nejed, so black did the landscape before us look, on nearer approach, that I almost repented of my resolution, and was considerably inclined to say, "Thus far enough, and no farther."

But "over shoes over boots," and the "tra Beatrice e te è questo muro" of the Florentine, though in a somewhat altered sense, ran in my memory, and gave me courage. And then we had already got so far that to turn back from what was yet to traverse, be it what it might, would have been an unpardonable want of heart. We now requested Zāmil to let us know where we were to find out our destined companions for the road. He answered that they had received orders to come in quest of us, and that they would unfailingly present themselves at our house the very same day.

'Obeyd, Ṭelāl's uncle, had left Ḥā'yel the day before on a military expedition against the Bedouins of the West. In common with all the sight-seers of the town, we had gone to witness his departure. It was a gay and interesting scene. 'Obeyd had caused his tent to be pitched in the plain without the northern walls; and there reviewed his forces. About one-third were on horseback, the rest were mounted on light and speedy camels; all had spears and matchlocks, to which the gentry added swords; and while they rode hither and thither in sham manœuvres over the parade-ground, the whole appearance was very picturesque and tolerably martial. 'Obeyd now unfurled his own peculiar standard, in which the green colour distinctive of Islam had been added border-wise to the white ground of the ancestral Nejdean banner, mentioned fourteen centuries back by 'Omar-ebn-Kelthoom, the poet of Ṭaghleb, and many others. Barakāt and myself mixed with the crowd of spectators. 'Obeyd saw us, and it was now several days since we had last met. Without hesitating, he cantered up to us, and while he tendered his hand for a farewell shake, he said: "I have heard that you intend going to Ri'ad; there you will meet with 'Abd-Allah the eldest son of Feysul; he is my particular friend; I should much desire to see you high in his good graces, and to that end I have written him a letter in your behalf, of which you yourselves are to be the bearers; you will find it in my house, where I have left it for you with one of my servants." He then assured us that if he found us

still at Hā'yel on his return, he would continue to befriend us in every way; but that if we journeyed forward to Nejed, we should meet with a sincere friend in 'Abd-Allah, especially if we gave him the letter in question.

He then took his leave with a semblance of affectionate cordiality that made the bystanders stare; thus supporting to the last the profound dissimulation which he had only once belied for a moment. The letter was duly handed over to us the same afternoon by his head-steward, whom he had left to look after the house and garden in his absence. Doubtless my readers will be curious to know what sort of recommendation 'Obeyd had provided us with. It was written on a small scrap of thick paper, about four inches each way, carefully folded up and secured by three seals. However, "our fears forgetting manners," we thought best with Hamlet to make perusal of this grand commission before delivering it to its destination. So we undid the seals with precautions admitting of reclosing them in proper form, and read the royal knavery. I give it word for word; it ran thus: "In the Name of God the Merciful, the Compassionate, We 'Obeyd-ebn-Rasheed salute you, O 'Abd-Allah son of Feyṣulebn-Sa'ood, and peace be on you, and the mercy of God and His blessings." (This is the invariable commencement of all Wahnābee epistles, to the entire omission of the complimentary formulas used by other Orientals.) "After which," so proceeded the document, "we inform you that the bearers of this are one Seleem-el'Eyṣ, and his comrade Barakāt-esh-Shāmee, who give themselves out for having some knowledge in"—here followed a word of equivocal import, capable of interpretation alike by "medicine" or "magic," but generally used in Nejed for the latter, which is at Ri'ad a capital crime. "Now may God forbid that we should hear of any evil having befallen you. We salute also your father Feyṣul, and your brothers, and all your family; and anxiously await your news in answer. Peace be with you." Here followed the signet impression.

A pretty recommendation, especially under the actual circumstances. However, not content with this, 'Obeyd found means to transmit further information regarding us, and all in the same tenour, to Ri'ad, as we afterwards discovered. For his letter, I need hardly say that it never passed from our

possession, where it yet remains as an interesting autograph, to that of 'Abd-Allah ; with whom it would inevitably have proved the one only thing wanting, as we shall subsequently see, to make us leave the forfeit of our lives in the Nejdian man-trap.

Before evening three men knocked at our door ; they were our future guides. The eldest bore the name of Mubārek, and was a native of the suburbs of Bereydaḥ ; all three were of the genuine Kaseem breed, darker and lower in stature than the inhabitants of Ḥā'yel, but not ill-looking, and extremely affable in their demeanour. Mubārek told us that their departure from Ḥā'yel had been at first fixed for the morrow, or the 7th of the month, but that owing to some delay on the part of their companions, for the band was a large one, it had been subsequently put off to the 8th or the day after. Such procrastinations are of continual occurrence in the East, where the mode of travelling renders them unavoidable, and one must be prepared for them and take them as they come, under penalty of making oneself ridiculous by unavailing impatience. We now struck a bargain with Mubārek for the hire of two of his camels to bear ourselves and our chattels ; the price was almost ridiculously small, even after making allowance for the comparatively high value of money in these inland regions ; and we were glad to see that the polite and chatty manners of our new guides promised us an agreeable journey.

We had soon made all necessary arrangements for our departure, got in a few scattered debts, packed up our pharmacopœia, and nothing now remained but the pleasurable pain of farewells. They were many and mutually sincere. Meta'ab had indeed made his a few days before, when he, a second time, left Ḥā'yel for the pastures ; Ṭelāl we had already taken leave of, but there remained his younger brother Moḥammed to give us a hearty adieu of good augury. Most of my old acquaintance or patients, Doḥey' the merchant, Moḥammed the judge, Doheym and his family, not forgetting our earliest friend Seyf the chamberlain, Sa'eed the cavalry officer, and others of the court, freemen and slaves, white or black (for negroes readily follow the direction indicated by their masters, and are not ungrateful if kindly treated while kept in their due position), and many others of whose names Homer would have

made a catalogue and I will not, heard of our near departure, and came to express their regrets, with hopes of future meeting and return.

'Abd-el-Maḥsin, too, accompanied by Bedr, the eldest of Ṭelāl's sons, came a little before evening to see us a last time and bid us God-speed. All along he had been our daily and welcome companion, and his cultivated and well-stored mind, set off by ready eloquence, had done much to charm our stay and to take off the loneliness that even in the midst of a crowd is apt to weigh on strangers in a foreign land. The boy, too, Bedr, was much what his father must have been at that age; we had helped to cure him of some slight feverish attacks not uncommon at that time of life, and our young patient showed in return steady gratitude and simple attachment, more, perhaps, than is customary among children, at least of high birth, while his modest and polite manners would have done credit to a European court education. 'Abd-el-Maḥsin assured us, in Ṭelāl's name and his own, that we carried with us the goodwill of all the court, and we sat thus together till sunset, staving off the necessity of separating by word and answer that had no meaning, except that we could not make up our minds to part. Our latest, but not least affectionate visit, that night was from Zāmil.

Early next morning, before day, Mubārek and another of his countrymen, named Dahesh, were at our door with the camels. Some of our town friends had also come, even at this hour, to accompany us as far as the city gates. We mounted our beasts, and while the first sunbeams streamed level over the plain, passed through the south-western portal beyond the market-place, the 8th of September 1862, and left the city of Hā'yel.



## CHAPTER V

## JOURNEY FROM HĀYEL TO BEREYDAH

More bleak to view, the hills at length recede,  
 And, less luxuriant, smoother vales extend;  
 Immense horizon-bounded plains succeed,  
 Far as the eye discerns, without an end.

Byron

*A New Stage of our Journey—Comparative Unimportance of Bedouins in Central Arabia—Our Travelling Companions—Their Characters—Horse Trade from Shomer to Koweyt—Limits of Djebel 'Āja'—'Eyn Thejjajah—Valley between 'Āja' and Solma—Attack of Harb Bedouins—Djebel Solma—Tomb of Hātim-et-Tā'i—Feyḍ—Its Governor and Court of Justice—Description of the Village—Solibah Encampment—Upper Kaseem—Its Territorial Features—Arab Poetry—Nejed—Vegetation—Springs—Watershed of Northern Arabia, whereabouts—Kefa, its Appearance—Koseybah—Kowārah, its Situation—Wahhābee Limit—Stone Circle of 'Eyoon—Topographical Features of Lower Kaseem—Its Culture—Palm Groves, Cotton, and curious Narcotic Plant—Character of the Inhabitants—Their Intercourse with Hejāz—Its Effects—Cabul Darweeshes—'Eyoon—Foleyh's Supper—Road to Bereydaḥ—Ghāt—False Alarm—Distant View of Bereydaḥ—Suburb of Doweyr—Mubārek's Cottage—Family Life.*

ANOTHER stage of our way. From Gaza to Ma'ān, from Ma'ān to the Djowf, from the Djowf to Hā'yel, three such had now been gone over, not indeed without some fatigue or discomfort, yet at comparatively little personal risk, except what nature herself, not man, might occasion. For to cross the stony desert of the northern frontier, or the sandy Nefood in the very height of summer, could not be said to be entirely free from danger, where in these waterless wastes thirst, if nothing else, may alone, and often does, suffice to cause the disappearance of the over-adventurous traveller, nay, even of many a Bedouin, no less effectually than a lance thrust or a musket ball. But if nature had been so far unkind, of man at least we had hitherto not

much to complain; the Bedouins on their route, however rough and uncouth in their ways, had, with only one exception, meant us fairly well, and the townsmen in general had proved friendly and courteous beyond our expectation. Once within the established government limits of Ebn-Rasheed and among his subjects, we had enjoyed our share in the common security afforded to wayfarers and inhabitants for life and property, while good success had hitherto accompanied us. "Judge of the day by its dawn," say the Arabs; and although this proverb, like all proverbs, does not always hold exactly true, whether for sunshine or cloud, yet it has its value at times. And thus, whatever unfavourable predictions or dark forebodings our friends might hint regarding the Inner Nejed and its denizens, we trusted that so favourable a past augured somewhat better things for the future.

From physical and material difficulties like those before met with, there was henceforward much less to fear. The great heats of summer were past, the cooler season had set in; besides, our path now lay through the elevated table-land of Central Arabia, whose northern rim we had already surmounted at our entrance on the Djebel Shomer. Nor did there remain any uncultivated or sandy track to cross comparable to the Nefood of Djowf between Ḥā'yel and Ri'ad; on the contrary, we were to expect pasture lands and culture, villages and habitations, cool mountain air, and a sufficiency if not an abundance of water. Nor were our fellow companions now mere Bedouins and savages, but men from town or village life, members of organized society, and so far civilized beings.

When adieu, lookings back, wavings of the hand, and all the customary signs of farewell and good omen were over between our Ḥā'yel friends and ourselves, we pursued our road by the plain which I have already described as having been the frequent scene of our morning walks; but instead of following the south-westerly path towards Kefār, whose groves and roof-tops now rose in a blended mass before us, we turned eastward, and rounded, though at some distance, the outer wall of Ḥā'yel for nearly half an hour, till we struck off by a south-easterly track across stony ground, diversified here and there by wells, each with a cluster of gardens and a few houses in its neighbourhood. At last we reached a narrow winding pass among the cliffs of

Djebel 'Āja', whose mid-loop encircles Ḥā'yel on all sides, and here turned our heads to take a last far-off view of what had been our home, or the agreeable semblance of a home, for several weeks.

Our only companions as yet were Mubārek and Dahesh. We had outstripped the rest, whose baggage and equipments had required a more tedious arrangement than our own. However, this could not long continue; and accordingly after some hours of turning and twisting in the mountain gorges, we stopped near noon in a little shrubby plain, where our camels found pasture and we shade, to await the arrival of our lingering fellow travellers.

Before long they came up, a motley crew. Ten or thereabouts of the Ḳaseem; some from Bereydaḥ itself, others from neighbouring towns; two individuals who gave themselves out, but with more asseveration than truth, to be natives of Mecca itself; three Bedouins, two of whom belonged to the Shomer clan, the third an 'Anezah of the north; next a runaway negro conducting four horses, destined to pass the whole breadth of Arabia and to be shipped off at Koweyt on the Persian Gulf for Indian sale; two merchants, one from Zulphah in the province of Sedeyr, the other from Zobeyr near Baṣrah; lastly, two women, wives of I know not exactly whom in the caravan, with some small children: all this making up, ourselves included, a band of twenty-seven or twenty-eight persons, the most mounted on camels, a few on horseback, and accompanied by a few beasts of burden alongside—such was our Canterbury pilgrims' group.

"The more the merrier," says the proverb. And so it was for the most of our party, though we had an exception in the persons of the two self-indited Meccans, Moḥammed and Ibraheem, sour-tempered individuals, always complaining, quarrelling, and backbiting. They stated themselves to have been corn merchants, ruined in the great inundation, which carried away or injured a third of the sacred town in the autumn of 1861; and since that time had been travelling, so they said, from place to place and from chief to chief, to seek from the liberality of the faithful wherewithal to pay their debts on returning to their native city. But their statement abounded with intrinsic improbabilities, and when such were pointed out,

as occasionally was the case, they had ready another entirely different story, equally false perhaps, of feud and manslaughter. The sum total was that they were beggars and impostors, and, so far as we could make out from circumstances hardly worth detailing, Moḥammed was a cook from Cairo, and Ibraheem a bankrupt shopkeeper, native of Gaza or thereabouts. They were, however, sufficiently acquainted with Mecca to have much to say about that place, and I learnt from them many curious particulars regarding the pilgrimage and its accompaniments. These two worthies gave us the equivocal pleasure of their society not only the whole way to Bereydah, but even to Ri'ād itself, where, if my readers will allow me to anticipate for a moment the course of events, Ibraheem distinguished himself by stealing one of our saddle-bags on his departure.

The 'Anezah Bedouin, Ghāshee, was a different and a more amusing character. Though young, he had roved over all that lies between Anatolia and Yemen, visited many cities, and made acquaintance with innumerable chiefs and tribes, amongst whom were some, thus I soon found to my great anxiety, with whom I had been myself personally intimate while in Syria. Indeed it was a remarkably good fortune that Ghāshee and I had never met under the tents of Fāris-ebn-Hoḍeyb or Ḥa'il-ebn-Djandul among the Sebaa' or the Soā'limah, or an awkward recognition, worse even than that of our Damascene friend at Ḥā'yel, must have resulted.

The Zobeyr merchant and his associate were polite and intelligent men, fairly conversable, and who told us much worth hearing; views and facts to be interwoven, where occasion serves, into the many-coloured web of this narrative.

Among the natives of Kaseem itself, one, by name Foleyh, an inhabitant of the large village called 'Eyoon, richly dressed and mounted on a handsome horse, was acknowledged by all for the most important personage in the caravan. He belonged to one of the old and noble families of his province, and was a landholder of more than ordinary wealth. When we reach 'Eyoon we shall be his guests at supper.

The other members of the caravan presented nothing worthy of especial notice, quiet business-like men, taken up with their own small affairs of commerce and cultivation, or absorbed in the passing events of the journey—every-day characters, soon



known and soon forgotten. I must, however, make an exception in favour of the negro Ghorra: a thorough African, half-cracked, and a fugitive from his master at Medinah, he had sought and obtained a kind of protection from Ṭelāl at Ḥā'yel, and was now, legally or not, in possession of his liberty. A rich artisan of Shomer had entrusted him with four fine horses, and Ghorra, delighted with his newly acquired dignity of free-man and jockey, danced, grinned, sang, and diverted himself further by playing so many tricks and telling such extraordinary and inconceivable lies, that he often aroused the anger of the more serious Arabs. At Bereydah we parted, but met again at Ri'ād, whither he had preceded us by a few days only; but those few had been well employed, and he had already obtained himself the reputation of being the greatest liar ever known in the Nejdean capital—no slight distinction, all things considered.

More than half of the export of Arab horses to Bombay, I may here remark, passes by the seaport of Koweyt, especially since the growing importance of that active little town in late years. The animals themselves are generally from the north of Arabia, or the Syrian desert, and of real Arab, though not of Nejdean breed. In what consists the difference between ordinary Arab and Nejdean horses, how far the latter surpass the former, where they are to be found, and what becomes of them, are points which I must reserve till we reach the noble creatures in the heart of Nejed. But the former, of Shomer or 'Anezah breed, are high-blooded and often very perfect in all their points, and such were those which Ghorra now led for Koweyt.

Thus assembled, on we went together, now amid granite rocks, now crossing grassy valleys, till near sunset we stopped under a high cliff at the extreme southerly verge of Djebel 'Āja', or, in modern parlance, of Djebel Shomer. The mountain here extended far away to right and left; but in front a wide plain of full twenty miles across opened out before us, till bounded southwards by the long bluish chain of Djebel Solma, whose line runs parallel to the heights we were now to leave, and belongs to the same formation and rocky mass denominated in a comprehensive way the mountains of Ṭā'i or Shomer. Solma is, however, in height and length unequal to 'Āja', for

while this latter range crosses nearly two-thirds of Arabia in a continuous line, and attains at times an elevation of 1,400 feet or thereabouts above the plain, Solma does not seem to own a crest of above seven or eight hundred feet at most.

Here—that is, where we now halted to make our evening meal, at the foot of Ajas—was a source of clear water, not undeservedly named by the people of the land “the abundant-gushing fountain.” The full moon rose on the east over the great plain like the open sea; we lighted our fires and prepared our supper. This was simple enough—unleavened bread, and coffee to wash it down. Our only additional dainties were dried dates laid in at Hā'yel; no other kind of provision can bear the heat of day travelling in this climate. It was indeed September, but September in Arabia is not exactly September in England, though in these uplands the temperature was colder than the southerly degree of latitude taken alone might have led us to expect.

Scarcely was supper over and a pipe smoked than we remounted our camels, and rode slowly on under the glorious moonlight till it almost blended with the dawn. Our line of march crossed the plain at right angles to its length, and while we advanced by the deceptive glitter of the moonbeams, we soon lost all distinct view of the mountains before or behind us, and seemed to be in the midst of a vast whitish lake, where patches of dark green, formed by a kind of broom and similar shrubs, lay around like islands in the water. The soil here is a light earth mixed with sand, and so it continues throughout Upper Kaseem; it is not unfertile, but is scantily supplied with water; offering tolerable pasture land for flocks and herds, but rarely presenting irrigation enough to merit a village. At last, fairly tired out and drunk with drowsiness, to translate the Arab phrase, we staggered off our camels to the ground, and there slept through the short cool hours of late night and early morning.

The whole of the next day, till about four in the afternoon, was spent in traversing what remained of this great plain. There we fell in with a danger entirely unexpected by myself and my companion, but against which the more experienced men of Kaseem had been all along on the look-out; indeed, it was precisely the fear of some such occurrence that had urged them to their

forced night march and to the quickened pace of the following day.

This valley, the separation of Solma from 'Āja', is of a length much greater than its breadth, and attains westward the very neighbourhood of Medinah, thus opening out into the passes of Ḥejāz and the great pilgrim route a little above the town where Mahomet lies buried. Now it so happens that the portion of the Ḥajj road, corresponding to this opening, is, and always has been more than any other, infested by marauding Bedouins, principally of the Ḥarb tribe, who have often here stopped the entire pilgrim caravans in defiance of their Turkish guard, and who, not content with the booty captured in Ḥejāz, often take a run up the very valley which we were now crossing ; and it requires all the vigilance and energy of Ṭelāl to prevent their inroads from becoming habitual, and thus interrupting the regular communication between his dominions and Nejed.

Our band, who had a wholesome fear of meeting with one of these nomade foray-parties, here quickened their pace, and the event justified their precautions. For, at about three in the afternoon, we saw some way off to our west a troop of these identical Bedouins coming up from the direction of Medinah. While they were yet in the distance, and half-hidden from view by the shrubs and stunted acacias of the plain, we could not precisely distinguish their numbers ; but they were evidently enough to make us desire, with Orlando, "that we might be better strangers." On our side we mustered about fifteen matchlocks, besides a few spears and swords. The Bedouins had already perceived us, and continued to approach, though in the desultory and circuitous way which they affect when doubtful of the strength of their opponent ; still they gained on us more than was pleasant.

Fourteen armed townsmen might stand for a reasonable match against double the number of Bedouins, and in any case we had certainly nothing better to do than to put a bold face on the matter. The 'Eyoon chief, Foleyh, with two of his countrymen and Ghāshee, carefully primed their guns, and then set off at full gallop to meet the advancing enemy, brandishing their weapons over their heads, and looking extremely fierce. Under cover of this manœuvre the rest of our band set about getting their arms ready, and an amusing scene ensued. One had lost



his match, and was hunting for it in his housings, another in his haste to ram the bullet home had it stuck midway in the barrel, and could neither get it up nor down, the lock of a third was rusty and would not do duty ; the women began to whine piteously ; the two Meccans, who for economy's sake were both riding one only camel, a circumstance which caused between them many international squabbles, tried to make their beast gallop off with them, and leave the others to their fate, while the more courageous animal, despising such cowardly measures, insisted on remaining with his companions and sharing their lot ;—all was thoroughly Arab, much hubbub and little done. Had the menacing feint of the four who protected our rear proved insufficient, we might all have been in a very bad predicament, and this feeling drew every face with reverted gaze in a backward direction. But the Ḥarb banditti, intimidated by the bold countenance of Foleyḥ and his companions, wheeled about and commenced a skirmishing retreat, in which a few shots guiltless of bloodshed were fired for form's sake on either side, till at last our assailants fairly disappeared in the remote valley.

Our valiant champions now returned from pursuit, much elated with their success, and we journeyed on together, skirting the last rocky spur of Solma, close by the spot where Ḥāṭim Ṭā'ī, the well-known model, half mythic and half historical, of Arab hospitality and exaggerated generosity, is said to be buried. Here we crossed some low hills that form a sort of offshoot to the Solma mountain, and limit the valley ; and the last rays of the setting sun gilded to our view in a sandy bottom some way off the palm-trees of Feyd.

This ancient village or townlet is situated on one of the tracks that lead diagonally from Coufa or Meshid 'Alee to Medinah, and now belongs to the government of Ṭelāl. Its local chief or president is chosen from among the natives of the place, such being in general Ṭelāl's system, for it is only in rare instances and for very particular reasons that he appoints one of the capital or the central district to be prefect in a distant locality. However, all rules admit of exceptions, and immediate recourse to the central authority becomes at times indispensable. Accordingly extraordinary commissioners are not unknown even in Arabia, and we now precisely happened to fall in with one.



Quarrels had arisen between the inhabitants of Feyd, and the local governor had proved incompetent to re-establish peace and order, so that a king's officer from Hā'yel had just been sent to take cognizance of the matter. Hence, at the very hour when we entered the village, a little after sunset, a group of inhabitants clustered in an open space near the walls marked the presence of Telāl's commissioner, who was there holding his court of justice.

In a country where every man is his own lawyer, and where the jury too is of a simpler formation and much less numerous than in English courts, criminal causes are comparatively soon settled. The head man of the place, the village Ḳadee, a personage never wanting even in the smallest Arab community, and two or three of the principal inhabitants, usually fill the place of jurors, though their verdict is after all rather of moral than of strictly legal weight. The office of crown advocate merges in the judge, and that of counsel in the accused party himself. Sometimes, however, the prosecution is conducted by the plaintiff, when distinct from the supreme authority itself, for instance, in cases of private murder and the like. We had the advantage of being present while sentence was passed on one of the Feyd culprits, and of witnessing its execution immediately after; it was identically the same with that which many a schoolboy in our own conservative island incurs from the justice of his offended master; and here also the sufferer screamed much more loudly than the light infliction warranted.

It is only fair to say that in capital proceedings, and indeed in all more serious affairs, Arab justice is by no means equally rough and ready. Witnesses are summoned and sworn in, the trial lasts many days, appeal from a lower to a higher tribunal up to that of the monarch himself is granted if asked, and after final sentence has been pronounced, execution is deferred for a space of never less than twenty-four hours and sometimes prorogued for weeks and months, till matters often end in a free pardon, or in a mitigation of the legal penalty. Nor can the most absolute rulers of Arabia violate with impunity the restrictions placed by a sense of responsibility and humanity on the too rapid course of such trials, or venture to condemn a subject to death in time of peace simply on their own authority, or without the stated intervention of legal procedures. Here,

again, we may note an important resemblance between the Arab pure and the European.

We had halted close by the village gate. But Mubārek judged, and probably with good reason, that among men whose whole thoughts were taken up by feuds and trials, our supper might stand a chance of being but a poor one if sought for in the cottages of Feyd itself. It happened that some Şolibah Bedouins were encamped at a few minutes' distance from the village, and to their tents we directed our camels, alighted, and after a brief introduction we had the pleasure of seeing a faint column of smoke arise behind the tent walls—in a land like this, a sure sign of kitchen operations. Our supper was not of superfine quality, for the Şolibahs are poor, but it was abundant in quantity, and thereby well fitted for travellers like ourselves, after a long march of two days and a night with hardly any rest or pause.

Feyd may be taken as a tolerable sample of the villages met with throughout Northern or Upper Kaseem, for they all bear a close likeness in their main features, though various in size. Imagine a little sandy hillock of about sixty or seventy feet high in the midst of a wide and dusty valley; part of the eminence itself and the adjoining bottom is covered by low earth-built houses, intermixed with groups of the feathery Ithel. The grounds in the neighbourhood are divided by brick walls into green gardens, where gourds and melons, leguminous plants and maize, grow alongside of an artificial irrigation from the walls among them; palms in plenty—they were now heavy laden with red-brown fruits; and a few peach or apricot trees complete the general lineaments. The outer walls are low, and serve more for the protection of the gardens than of the dwellings; here are neither towers nor trenches, nor even, at least in many places, any central castle or distinguishable residence for the chief; his habitation is of the same one-storied construction as those of his neighbours, only a little larger. Some of these townlets are quite recent, and date from the Shomer annexation, which gave this part of the province a degree of quiet and prosperity unknown under their former Wahnabee rulers.

Next morning, the 10th of September, we were all up by moonlight, two or three hours before dawn, and off on our road to the south-east. The whole country that we had to traverse

for the next four days was of so uniform a character, that a few words of description may here serve for the landscape of this entire stage of our journey.

Upper Kāseem is an elevated plateau or steppe, and forms part of a long upland belt, crossing diagonally the northern half of the Peninsula; one extremity reaches the neighbourhood of Zobeyr and the Shaṭṭ-el-'Aarab, while the other extends downwards to the vicinity of Medinah. Its surface is in general covered with grass in the spring and summer seasons, and with shrubs and brushwood at all times, and thus affords excellent pasture for sheep and camels. Across it blows the fresh eastern gale, so celebrated in Arab poetry under the name of "Şeba Nejdin," or "Zephyr of Nejed" (only it comes from precisely the opposite corner to the Greek and Roman Zephyr), and continually invoked by sentimental bards to bring them news of imaginary loves or pleasing reminiscences. No wonder, for most of these versifiers being themselves natives of the barren Hejāz or the scorching Tehāmāh, perhaps inhabitants of Egypt and Syria, and knowing little of Arabia, except what they have seen on the dreary Meccan pilgrim road, they naturally look back to with longing and frequently record whatever glimpses chance may have allowed them of the cooler and more fertile highlands of the centre, denominated by them Nejed in a general way, with their transient experience of its fresh and invigorating climate, of its courteous men and sprightly maidens.

But when, nor is this seldom, the sweet smell of the aromatic thyme-like plants that here abound, mixes with the light morning breeze and enhances its balmy influence, then indeed can one excuse the raptures of an Arab Ovid or Theocritus, and appreciate—at least I often did—their yearnings after Nejed, and all the praises they lavish on its memory.

Then said I to my companion, while the camels were hastening  
To bear us down the pass between Meneefah and Demar,  
"Enjoy while thou canst the sweets of the meadows of Nejed :  
With no such meadows and sweets shalt thou meet after this evening.  
Ah ! heaven's blessing on the scented gales of Nejed,  
And its greensward and groves glittering from the spring shower,  
And thy dear friends, when thy lot was cast awhile in Nejed—  
Little hadst thou to complain of what the days brought thee ;  
Months flew past, they passed and we perceived not,  
Nor when their moons were new, nor when they waned."

—Regrets for an unwilling departure. Another, now far away from the land of his real or imaginary loves, thus expresses his longings :—

Ah ! breeze of Nejed, when thou blowest fresh from Nejed,  
 Thy fanning adds love to my love and sorrow to my sorrow.  
 When the turtle-dove is cooing in the bright glancing morn  
 From its leafy cage over tangled tufts of thyme,  
 I wept as a very child would weep, and could bear up no longer,  
 And my heart revealed to itself its long-hidden secret.  
 Yet they say that when the beloved one is close at hand  
 Love cloy, and that distance, too, brings forgetfulness.  
 Presence and distance have I tried, and neither aught availed me,  
 Save that better is for me when the loved one's abode is near, than  
     when it is distant ;  
 Save that nearness of the loved one's abode gives little solace  
     Unless the loved one herself requite love with love.

. . . . But enough, I hope, to awake in the sympathetic reader something of the feelings with which myself, with two or three companions of more delicate mental fibre than the rest, made ourselves "as sad as night only for wantonness," by reciting scraps of Arab poetry, while the breeze of Nejed blew over us in the uplands of Nejed. And now let us return to the prosaic and actual features of the country.

Sometimes the plain sinks for miles together into a shallow irregular basin, where streams pour down and water collects in the rainy season, leaving pools not entirely dried up even in autumn. Here the alluvial soil bears a more vigorous crop of shrubs, diversified with occasional trees, generally Ṭalḥ and Nebaa', occasionally Sidr ; the former is a large tree of roundish and scanty leafage, with a little dry berry for fruit, its branches are wide-spreading and thorny here and there ; the second is more shrub-like in its growth, though its clustered stems often attain a considerable height ; its leaf is very small, ovate, and of a bright green ; the last is a little but elegant acacia. These same trees are, but more seldom, to be met with on the high grounds also, especially the Ṭalḥ. But the Ithel, a kind of larch, abundant throughout Arabia, and the Ghaḍa euphorbia, prefer the sand-slopes and hollows.

All along this plateau, from distance to distance, and intersecting it at an acute angle, ran long and broad valleys of light soil, half chalk, half sand. In these natural trenches water is



always present, not indeed on the surface, but wherever wells are sunk, which is generally in the neighbourhood of some little conical hillock, that seems placed there merely to serve as an indication where men may dig for the source of fertility. .

Hard by the wells rise the villages of Upper *Ḳaseem*; they are, if I was rightly informed, about forty in number; their respective number of inhabitants appears to vary from five hundred to three thousand; the entire population may be reckoned at between twenty-five and thirty thousand souls, a slender amount considering the extent of the province. We passed eight villages on our way, and halted in four; one of these was *Ḳefa*, said to be the largest in the district. Every hamlet is surrounded by a proportional extent of palm-groves, gardens, and fields, reaching not unfrequently far down the valley, like a long green streak on a yellow carpet, along a series of wells, which mark the direction of some underground water-course. I was told that a new well opened to the east will often diminish the supply of a westerly source, a fact which may imply the general slope downwards of the continent in the latter direction.

From my own observations I think that the watershed or highest line of the whole belt of land which lies between the *Djowf* northward and the steppe whose breadth we now crossed inclusively, should be sought for at about sixty miles due east of *Hā'yel*, thus corresponding in longitude with the most elevated part of *Djebel Ṭoweyḳ*, the "twisted mountain," whose steppes form the great central plateau of *Nejed Proper* to the south. If this be the case, the backbone or main ridge of Arabia would bear from N.N.W. to S.S.E. between  $45^{\circ}$  and  $46^{\circ}$  longitude Greenwich, and from  $29^{\circ}$  to  $24^{\circ}$  latitude north; its greatest altitude is behind *Djelājil* in the province of *Sedeyr*, whence it gradually lowers till it is lost in the sandy desert of the south.

On each side of this ridge, and to the south also, Arabia slopes down coastwards to the Persian Gulf, Red Sea, and Indian Ocean, though with some local interruptions arising from the lateral chains of '*Āja*', *Solma*, *Ṭoweyḳ*, and *Dowāsir*, besides the occasional anomalies presented by the seashore line and its craggy range, which rises to a great height in the northern *Hejāz*, *Djebel 'Aasèer*, some points of *Yemen* and *Ḥadramaut*, and yet more in '*Omān*.'

We journeyed on, making every day about twelve or fourteen hours' march, at a rate of about five miles per hour, or a little more,—the ordinary pace of a riding camel. We had nothing more to fear from Bedouins, and the few whom we might henceforth meet belonged to tribes of Ṭelāl's dominions, and were subject to his steady rule. I may as well here add, that towards the end of this same year 1862, Ṭelāl himself headed a successful campaign against the marauders of the Ḥarb clan, the same with whom we had met in the valley of Solma, and reduced them to submission sufficient for ensuring his own territories against further forays.

The moon was only a few nights after the full, and we had the advantage of her light for early starting. We would thus make our track, sometimes across the high grounds and pasture, sometimes traversing a sandy river-like valley, till day broke, and the sun rushed up, and shone on our left till noon, while we rode on, scattered along either side of the irregular streaks that marked the way, or in groups of twos and threes, or all together, while the men of Ḳaseem chatted and laughed, the merchants conversed, the Meccans quarrelled, the Bedouins, who sympathise little with the inhabitants of towns, nor overmuch with each other, rode in general each alone and at some distance ; the negro ran after his horses, which kept getting loose, and went a-grazing or scampered out of reach ; and the women, wrapped up from head to foot in their large indigo blue dresses, looked extremely like inanimate bundles to be taken to market somewhere ; nobody talked to them, and they of course talked to nobody.

Every morning we halted for coffee-making ; firewood was in plenty, and there was no particular hurry or fear of losing time. But we were dispensed from any more serious cookery, since henceforth our afternoon and night halts were always in the villages, where we seldom failed of a hospitable welcome ; and were that not forthcoming, we could at any rate purchase where-withal to make our evening meal.

The view was extensive, but rather monotonous. No high mountains, no rivers, no lakes, no streams ; but a constant reiteration of the landscape features above described. Only we sometimes could distinguish far off to the east a few faint blue peaks, the extreme offsets of Djebel Ṭoweyḵ, whither we were now slowly approaching. North, west, and south, all was open

plain. But the breeze blew fresh and the sun shone bright, birds twittered in the brushwood, and lizards and Djerboo'as ran about lightly chirping on all sides, or a covey of partridges (it was September) whirred up at our approach, and a long file of gazelles bounded away from before us, then stopped a minute at gaze, and bounded off again. The camels were in good condition, and most of the riders in excellent humour.

Our first evening halt after Feyd was at Kēfa, where we remained an entire day. It is a large scattered village, situated in a sandy hollow, and not ill provided with water. Like many other hamlets of this province, this is a thriving and increasing place ; indeed, we found the inhabitants busy at digging out and stone-binding a large new well ; they had just reached the first indications of moisture at about twelve feet deep. The stone here is calcareous, and so it is in general towards the centre of the Peninsula ; Djebel Toweyk itself is chiefly of the same formation, unlike the black rock and reddish granite of Djebel Shomer.

Our next halting-place was Kōseybah, a small hamlet, but abounding in gardens and fruit. The little hill up whose eastern side the houses are built, is in other parts so thickly covered with Ithel and palm as to be almost picturesque. The wells are many, and I doubt not that should Ṭelāl's rule continue long undisturbed in these parts, Kōseybah may in due time become considerable.

The third evening passed at Kowārah. This large village, which might almost be called a town, lies in a wooded and well-watered hollow, where its groves form a beautiful backpiece to the broken and thickety ground in front. Around, the plain is excavated into cliffs from twenty to sixty feet high, and furrowed by watercourses, or rank with thick brushwood and long herbage. Here is the last southerly station of Ṭelāl's territory ; here, too, as mostly elsewhere, the chief is of the natives of the soil, and order and security are the only tokens of central government.

On the 14th of September we left Kowārah behind, journeying on till near midday, when, after passing a few low hills, we came to a sudden dip in the land level, and the extent of Southern Kaseem burst on our view.

Now, for the first time, we could in some measure appreciate

the strength of the Wahhābee in his mastery over such a land. Before us to the utmost horizon stretched an immense plain, studded with towns and villages, towers and groves, all steeped in the dazzling noon, and announcing everywhere life, opulence, and activity. The average breadth of this populous district is about sixty miles, its length twice as much, or more; it lies full two hundred feet below the level of the uplands, which here break off like a wall. Fifty or more good-sized villages and four or five large towns form the commercial and agricultural centres of the province, and its surface is moreover thick strewn with smaller hamlets, isolated wells and gardens, and traversed by a network of tracks in every direction. Here begin and hence extend to Djebel Toweḳ itself the series of high watch-towers that afford the inhabitants a means, denied otherwise by their level flats, of discerning from afar the approach of foray or invasion, and thus preparing for resistance. For while no part of Central Arabia has an older or a better established title to civilization or wealth, no part also has been the starting point and theatre of so many wars, or witnessed the gathering of such numerous armies.

We halted for a moment on the verge of the uplands to enjoy the magnificent prospect before us. Below lay the wide plain; at a few miles' distance we saw the thick palm-groves of 'Eyoon, and what little of its towers and citadel the dense foliage permitted to the eye. Far off on our right, that is, to the west, a large dark patch marked the tillage and plantations which girdle the town of Rass; other villages and hamlets too were thickly scattered over the landscape. All along the ridge where we stood, and visible at various distances down the level, rose the tall circular watch-towers of Kaseem. But immediately before us stood a more remarkable monument, one that fixed the attention and wonder even of our Arab companions themselves.

For hardly had we descended the narrow path where it winds from ledge to ledge down to the bottom, when we saw before us several huge stones, like enormous boulders, placed endways perpendicularly on the soil, while some of them yet upheld similar masses laid transversely over their summit. They were arranged in a curve, once forming part, it would appear, of a large circle, and many other like fragments lay rolled on the



ground at a moderate distance ; the number of those still upright was, to speak by memory, eight or nine. Two, at about ten or twelve feet apart one from the other, and resembling huge gate-posts, yet bore their horizontal lintel, a long block laid across them ; a few were deprived of their upper traverse, the rest supported each its head-piece in defiance of time and of the more destructive efforts of man. So nicely balanced did one of these cross-bars appear, that in hope it might prove a rocking-stone, I guided my camel right under it, and then stretching up my riding-stick at arm's-length could just manage to touch and push it, but it did not stir. Meanwhile the respective heights of camel, rider, and stick taken together would place the stone in question full fifteen feet from the ground.

These blocks seem, by their quality, to have been hewn from the neighbouring limestone cliff, and roughly shaped, but present no further trace of art, no groove or cavity of sacrificial import, much less anything intended for figure or ornament. The people of the country attribute their erection to Dārim, and by his own hands, too, seeing that he was a giant ; perhaps, also, for some magical ceremony, since he was a magician. Pointing towards Rass, our companions affirmed that a second and similar stone circle, also of gigantic dimensions, existed there ; and, lastly, they mentioned a third towards the south-west, that is, on the confines of Hejāz.

That the object of these strange constructions was in some measure religious, seems to me hardly doubtful ; and if the learned conjectures that would discover a planetary symbolism in Stonehenge and Carnac have any real foundation, this Arabian monument, erected in a land where the heavenly bodies are known to have been once venerated by the inhabitants, may make a like claim ; in fact, there is little difference between the stone-wonder of Kaseem and that of Wiltshire, except that the one is in Arabia, the other, though the more perfect, in England.

It was now the hour of highest noon. Our band halted in the shade of these huge pillars to rest after the fatigue of a long march, and tell mythic fables of Dārim and his achievements, while Foleyḡ graciously invited the whole party, great and small, to supper at his dwelling in the neighbouring town of

'Eyoon. Needs not say that the invitation was gladly accepted ; and our future host, with his two companions, set off at once for the town, yet nearly two hours distant, to precede and prepare for the rest of the company, whilst we moved a little farther on, and took up temporary quarters and repose in the shade of a fruit-laden palm-grove near at hand by the side of a well, there to drink fresh water, and wait till the heat of the day should pass and the time come for pursuing our route to 'Eyoon. While we thus pause, and, by the gardener's permission, pick up ripe dates where they lie strewn by the water-channel's edge, a few words on the natural history and general character of the country around may not be ill-timed : they will serve for an introduction to a land no less new to my readers, perhaps, than it was to ourselves.

The Arabic word "Kaseem" denotes a sandy but fruitful ground. Such is, in fact, the leading idea of this province. The soil, red or yellow, appears indeed at first sight of little promise. Yet, unlike most things, it is better than it seems, and wherever irrigation reaches it bears a copious and varied vegetation. Fortunately, water is here to be met with everywhere, and at very little depth below the surface ; six feet or thereabouts was the farthest measure that I witnessed in any well of Kaseem from the curb-stone to the water-line, often it was much less. Mine was an autumn experience, when moisture is at its minimum in this climate, but in winter I was told that the wells fill to overflowing, and give rise to small lakes, some of which, though of course much shrunk in dimensions, outlast the summer, and even find their place in maps, though undeserving of the honour. The prevailing aspect of the land is level, but capricious-seeming. Sand-hills and slopes of fifty or sixty feet in height are not uncommon. These slopes are for the most part clothed with little climbing copses of Ithel and Ghada.

Here, as in most parts of Arabia, the staple article of cultivation is the date-palm. Of this tree there are, however, many widely-differing species, and Kaseem can boast of containing the best known anywhere, the *Khalaṣ* of *Ḥaṣa* alone excepted. The ripening season coincides with the latter half of August and the first of September, and we had thus an ample opportunity for testing the produce. Those who, like most Europeans at home,

only know the date from the dried specimens of that fruit shown beneath a label in shop-windows, can hardly imagine how delicious it is when eaten fresh and in Central Arabia. Nor is it when newly-gathered heating, a defect inherent to the preserved fruit everywhere; nor does its richness, however great, bring satiety: in short, it is an article of food alike pleasant and healthy. Its cheapness in its native land might astonish a Londoner. Enough of the very best dates from the Bereydah gardens to fill a large Arab handkerchief, about fifteen inches each way, almost to bursting, cost Barakāt and myself the moderate sum of three farthings. We hung it up from the roof-beam of our apartment to preserve the luscious fruit from the ants, and it continued to drip molten sweetness into a sugary pool on the floor below for three days together, before we had demolished the contents, though it figured at every dinner and supper during that period.

Date-trees are in consequence the main source of landed Arab wealth, and a small cluster of palms is often the entire maintenance of a poor townsman or villager. The fruit partly serves him and his household for aliment, in which it holds about the same proportion that bread does in France or Germany; the rest, often in large quantities, is exported to Yemen and Ḥejāz, in this respect less favoured by nature. To cut down the date-trees of an enemy is a great achievement in time of war, to plant with them a new piece of ground the first sign of increasing prosperity.

Fruit trees of various kinds, generally resembling those of Shomer, but more productive, are here also met with. Corn-fields, maize, millet, vetches, and the like, surround the villages, and afford a copious harvest, besides melons and pot-herbs. But the extent of cultivation and tillage is limited by the necessity of artificial irrigation.

Another produce of Ḳaseem, and it was like an old friend to me after so many years of absence from India, is the cotton-shrub, identical in species with that cultivated in Guzerat and Cutch. The inhabitants are well acquainted with its use, but the quantity grown is too slender to serve for foreign exportation. Under more propitious circumstances it might add much to the wealth of the country, for the climate and soil concur to give the plant sufficient vigour, and its crop is not less

copious here than in India, nor did the quality seem to me anyhow inferior.

Here also, for the first time, I met with a narcotic plant very common farther south, and gifted with curious qualities. Its seeds, in which the deleterious principle seems chiefly to reside, when pounded and administered in a small dose, produce effects much like those ascribed to Sir Humphry Davy's laughing gas; the patient dances, sings, and performs a thousand extravagances, till after an hour of great excitement to himself and amusement to the bystanders, he falls asleep, and on awaking has lost all memory of what he did or said while under the influence of the drug. To put a pinch of this powder into the coffee of some unsuspecting individual is a not uncommon joke, nor did I hear that it was ever followed by serious consequences, though an over-quantity might perhaps be dangerous. I myself tried it on two individuals, but in proportions, if not absolutely homœopathic, still sufficiently minute to keep on the safe side of risk, and witnessed its operation, laughable enough, but very harmless. The plant that bears these berries hardly attains in Kaseem the height of six inches above the ground, but in 'Omān I have seen bushes of it three or four feet in growth, and wide-spreading. The stems are woody, and of a yellow tinge when barked; the leaf of a dark-green colour and pinnated, with about twenty leaflets on either side; the stalks smooth and shining; the flowers are yellow, and grow in tufts, the anthers numerous; the fruit is a capsule, stuffed with a greenish padding, in which lie embedded two or three black seeds, in size and shape much like French beans; their taste sweetish, but with a peculiar opiate flavour; the smell heavy and almost sickly. While at Ṣohar in 'Omān, where this plant abounds, I collected some specimens intended for botanical recognition at home, but they with much else were lost in my subsequent shipwreck.

Stramonium Datura, or thorn-apple, is not uncommon, and its properties are well known, not for medicine, but for poison and quackery. But I vainly looked for the Indian hemp or ḥasheesh plant, nor did any one appear acquainted with it or its use, whereat I much wondered. Coffee does not grow here; it is imported from Yemen, sometimes by the direct road of Wadi Nejṛān, more commonly through Mecca. Articles of Egyptian



and of European manufacture are also brought hither from Mecca and Djiddah; and the phosphorized amadou boxes of Pollak, from Vienna, after passing through the sacred cities of Arabia, are to be met with in the shops of Bereydah and 'Oney-zah. An important branch of commerce was once carried on with Damascus, but of late years and under Wahnābee rule it has ceased to exist. The route northward from Ḳaseem to Syria does not pass by Djebel Shomer, but follows a straighter and easier line through Kheybar, and thence up the ordinary pilgrim-way.

Much regarding the character of the inhabitants may be collected from what I have already said; in physical endowments and stature they are somewhat inferior to the men of Shomer, and in certain respects to the inhabitants of Upper Nejed, but they surpass either in commercial and industrial talents; they present, also, much of the gay and cheerful spirit of the former, with not a little of the pertinacity and clannishness of the latter. But to these qualities the inhabitants of Ḳaseem add a dash of the cunning and restlessness of their Ḥejāz neighbours, with whom they have a slight degree of outward conformity, besides a share, though barely perceptible at first sight, of that selfish egotism which stamps the caste of Mecca and Medinah, even more than that of Tennyson's "Vere de Vere." But in spite of these unfavourable points, the Shomer type predominates decidedly in Ḳaseem, and the population in general offers good elements capable of being worked out into better things than can be hoped for under the present administration.

The sun was already declining when we quitted our palm-grove for the path leading to the town of 'Eyoon, where in the meantime Foley had been killing his lambs and cooking his rice for our entertainment; and considering that he had nearly thirty famished guests to provide for, we could not in common fairness but allow him a reasonable interval for preparation. Moreover the number of our party was now augmented by four beings of an entirely new order. These were travelling Darweeshes, two natives of Cabul, a third from Bokhara, and the fourth a Beloochee, who had taken the route through Central Arabia on their return from Mecca to their own respective countries in the East, and here their path fell in with and

awhile coincided with our own. One of them, the Beloochee, was an elderly man, of fifty or sixty, to judge by his white beard and wrinkled features, thin, tall, and hardly knowing a word of Arabic ; his three companions were younger and stouter ; all however bore evident marks of the long hardships and great fatigue of their protracted journey made entirely on foot, in such a climate and over such roads. Those from Cabul and Bokhara declared that before they could hope to regain their native hearths their pilgrimage would have lasted nearly two years, nor could it well take less after their manner of travelling. They all wore the peculiar costume of their profession and country—the high wool cap, the large upper robe, loose trowsers, and a wrapper cast across the shoulders. These Darweeshes lived on alms begged by the way, and had a very poor and a not undevout appearance.

However, few of our band welcomed their arrival, or were at all anxious to admit them into their company. The Darweesh in Inner Arabia is, in every respect, a fish out of water. The Wahnābees in general detest them, and they are scarcely better looked upon by the rest of the Arab population, in that they are in their way of life the embodiment of a religious system commonly regarded with indifference, often with aversion. The new comers were accordingly greeted by our companions with many sarcastic remarks and unfavourable comments ; till at last Arab good-nature got the better, and the Darweeshes were admitted to the participation of such advantages and assistance as travellers on the road can mutually afford or receive.

We were soon under the outer walls of 'Eyoon, a good-sized town containing at least ten thousand inhabitants according to my rough computation. Its central site, at the very juncture of the great northern and western lines of communication, renders it important, and for this reason it is carefully fortified, that is, for the country, and furnished with watch-towers, much resembling manufacturing chimneys in size and shape, besides a massive and capacious citadel. My readers may anticipate analogous, though proportionate, features in most other towns and villages of this province. We halted close by the northern portal, and here deposited our baggage, over which two of the band remained to keep guard in our absence, while we accompanied Foleyḥ to his dwelling.

We passed a large tank, more than half full of standing water, near the centre of the town, and skirted for some minutes the wall of the citadel, which appears to be of ancient date. At last we reached a side-door in the street, and hence were ushered into a large and well-planted garden, full of the loftiest palm-trees that I have ever seen. Here a square arbour, capable of containing forty men, had been erected under the shade of the palms; it was on this occasion well spread with mats and carpets, upon which the guests arranged themselves according to rank and condition. Meanwhile, Foleyh, who had already exchanged the dust-soiled clothes of the journey for clean shirts (it is the fashion here to multiply this important article of raiment by putting on a second over the first and a third over the second), and a magnificent upper robe of scarlet cloth, looking a very "pretty" man, stood at the entrance to introduce the guests and to superintend the solemn distribution of coffee by the youngsters of the family. In due time the supper itself arrived, two monstrous piles of rice and mutton, with some hashed vegetables, spices, and the rest, and dates for a side dish. Never were platters more speedily lightened of their contents, and loud praises were by all present bestowed on the cook and on his master. The sun had set, and as we were to start on our way during the night, it was impossible for us to remain longer within the town, whose gates were strictly closed during the hours of darkness. So we overwhelmed Foleyh with thanks and good wishes, and then returned to our baggage, while those who had been on guard in our absence now scampered off to the scene of hospitality, to get what share of the meal the jaws of their predecessors might not have devoured. It must have been a very scanty portion.

Between the town walls and the sand-hills close by was a sheltered spot, where we took about four hours of sleep, till the waning moon rose. Then all were once more in movement, camels gnarling, men loading, and the doctor and his apprentice mounting their beasts, all for Bereyda. But that town was distant, and when day broke at last there was yet a long road to traverse. This now lay amid mounds and valleys, thick with the vegetation already described; and somewhat after sunrise we took a full hour to pass the gardens and fields of Ghāt, a straggling village, where a dozen wells supplied the valley



with copious irrigation. On the adjoining hillocks—I may not call them heights—was continued the series of watch-towers, corresponding with others farther off that belonged to villages seen by glimpses in the landscape : I heard, but soon forgot, their names. Inability to note down at once similar details was a great annoyance to me; but the sight of a pencil and pocket-book would have been just then particularly out of place, and I was obliged to trust to memory, which on this, as on too many other occasions, played me false. My notes, too, taken when circumstances permitted, were lost in part in the shipwreck off Barka; others, jotted down on loose scraps of paper, disappeared, I know not how, while I was in the dreary delirium of typhoid fever at Aboo-Shahr and Baṣrah. Surely my reader must be very hard to satisfy, if this catalogue of mishaps does not suffice him by way of apology for the defectiveness of my broken narrative.

We were now drawing on towards the scene of the great conflict which was ultimately to decide the destinies of 'Oneyzah and Kaseem, and some apprehension of falling in with foraging parties prevailed throughout our band. From Bedouins, indeed, here and henceforth, travellers have nothing to apprehend; they are few in number and feeble in force. But a detachment from either of the hostile armies might make exercise of military license to the detriment of our baggage or persons. We had just left behind us the last plantations of Ghāt, and all thoughts and tongues were busy with fear and hope, when the negro horse-dealer, Ghorra, thought the opportunity for a practical joke too good to be neglected. Accordingly, after absenting himself for a few minutes, he rode suddenly up to the travellers with a terrified look, and informed them that he had just seen a large squadron of lancers and musketeers making right for our road. For several minutes the black liar enjoyed the confusion, alarm, preparations, and bustle produced by his news. The Meccans nearly fainted, and the women cried lamentably. But at last some bolder spirits, who had ventured a reconnoitre in the direction of the supposed enemy, returned with the consoling intelligence that it was all an invention. Anger then took the place of cowardice, and Ghorra hardly escaped rough usage for his gratuitous alarm.

A march of ten to twelve hours had tired us, and the weather



was oppressively close, no uncommon phenomenon in Kaseem, where, what between low sandy ground and a southerly latitude, the climate is much more sultry than in Djebel Shomer, or the mountains of Toweyk. So that we were very glad when the ascent of a slight eminence discovered to our gaze the long-desired town of Bereydah, whose oval fortifications rose to view amid an open and cultivated plain. It was a view for Turner. An enormous watch-tower, near a hundred feet in height, a minaret of scarce inferior proportions, a mass of bastioned walls, such as we had not yet witnessed in Arabia, green groves around and thickets of Ithel, all under the dreamy glare of noon, offered a striking spectacle, far surpassing whatever I had anticipated, and announced populousness and wealth. We longed to enter those gates and walk those streets. But we had yet a delay to wear out. At about a league from the town our guide Mubārek led us off the main road to the right, up and down several little but steep sand-hills and hot declivities, till about two in the afternoon, half roasted with the sun, we reached, never so weary, his garden gate.

Here, in a snug country-house, much resembling in size and construction many a peasant's dwelling in Southern Italy, lived Mubārek, with his family, brothers, and other relatives. Around was a pretty garden, with a central tank full of cool clear water from the adjoining well, and bordered by cotton plants, maize, and flowering shrubs, with date-trees at intervals; close by the tank stood an arbour of open trellis-work, but vine-roofed from the sun; just the place for dusty heat-wearied travellers to repose in and enjoy the freshness of the neighbouring pool. Here our host, without imitating the bad habit of the Druses in Lebanon (who begin by asking their guest what he would like, instead of anticipating his modesty), at once brought mats and cushions of country fashion, and when we had a moment taken breath, half reclining under the chequered shade, set before us a dainty dish of fresh dates, the produce of his orchard. Before long the members of the family who chanced to be at home, old and young, appeared one after another to pay their welcome, the women excepted, in whom such forwardness would be a breach of etiquette. For although the absolute seclusion, which, it is well known, imprisons, physically and morally, the fair sex in some Mahometan lands, is seldom if ever observed

in Arabia, where women bear a great part in active life and domestic cares, keep shops, buy, sell, and sometimes even go to war; yet there is not the easy and straightforward mixture of society that distinguishes Europe; and the female portion of the household, though not absolutely in the dark, is yet under a kind of shade. Thus women, young or old (I mean, of course, elderly), never sit at table with the men of the family, rarely join in their pleasure meetings, and above all may not in seemliness thrust themselves forward to welcome guests or strangers and converse with them. However, if one remains long enough to become in a manner part of the family, the ladies too end by growing more sociable, will now and then join in chat, and take interest in what is going on. Of course, in the dwellings of the poor women and men all live together, and little separation is or can be kept up; a narrow home going far to bring its tenants on a level. But in richer families and chieftains' houses the women are bound to occupy a separate quarter, whence, however, curiosity or business often draws them forth into the apartments of the other sex. Nor is the covering veil, though generally worn, nearly so strict an obligation as in Syria or Egypt. It is matter of custom, not of creed, and readily dispensed with when occasion requires. Indeed, in some parts of Arabia, 'Omān for instance, and its provinces, it is barely in use. Nor are Bedouin women apt to impose on their grimed and wizened faces a concealment that might on the whole be for their advantage. Among the rigid Waghābees alone the veil and the harem acquire something like exactness, and there Arab liberty consents to inflict on itself something of the ceremoniousness of Islam.

Our afternoon and evening passed very pleasantly with the Mubāreks, great and small, and a night's repose in the arbour—for the climate at this time of the year did not require the closer shelter of the house-roof—put us in condition to continue our way to Bereydaḥ. The suburb of "Doweyrah," "the small knot of houses," where we now were, is situated about a league or rather less from the town, but of the latter we could from hence see nothing, so thick grew the Ithel on the intervening sand-ridges. Our present intention was to make a very short stay at Bereydaḥ, and thence hasten on without delay to the interior

and reach the capital of Nejed, where a longer sojourn would evidently be desirable. But man proposes and God disposes, and we had to learn by experience that, after all imaginable precautions and devices, the entrance of the Wahnābee stronghold was not so easy a matter, nor to be had for the first asking.

## CHAPTER VI

## BEREYDAH

I cannot like, dread sire, your royal cave ;  
 Because I see, by all the tracks about,  
 Full many a beast goes in, but none come out.

*Pope*

*A Strange Sight on the Way to Bereydaḥ—Indo-Persian Pilgrim Encampment—Feyṣul's Conduct towards the Pilgrims—Aboo-Boṭeyn, his Extortions and Flight—The Caravan at Bereydaḥ—Mohanna—His Character, Policy—His Extortions—Our new Lodgings—Difficulty of Proceeding further—Visit to Mohanna—His Castle—Its Architecture—Mohanna's K'hāwah—Nejed and Wakhābees—Our Embarrassment—Meeting with Aboo-'Eysa—His Family, past History, and Adventures—His Position under the Rī'ād Government—His Character—He offers to conduct us to Rī'ād—A Day at Bereydaḥ—Visit to the Persian Encampment—Market-place—Central Square—Mosque—Want of Inscriptions—Salt—Character of the Town and Population—The Houses—Conversation at Bereydaḥ—Walk in the Gardens—Arab Hydraulic Machines—Military Operations—The Nejdean Camp—A Skirmish with the Men of 'Oneyzah—Part borne by the Bereydaḥ Townsmen—Evening—Arab and Persian Voices—Night and Morning—Villages of the Neighbourhood—Influence of the Wakhābee Government on Commerce, Agriculture, and Cattle Breeding—General Reaction—Change effected by the Sa'ood Dynasty in Central Arabia—Comparison between Wakhābees and Osmanlis—Visit to the Suburbs of 'Oneyzah—Moḥammed-'Alee-esh-Shirāzee—His Correspondence with Feyṣul—His Motives for a Journey to Rī'ād—He agrees with Aboo-'Eysa—His History and Character—Habbāsh and the Coffee-mortar—We leave Bereydaḥ.*

THE morning was bright, yet cool, when we got free of the maze of Ithel and sand-slopes, and entered the lanes that traverse the garden circle round the town, in all quiet and security. But our approach to Bereydaḥ was destined to furnish us an unexpected and undesired surprise, though indeed less startling than that which discomposed our first



arrival at Hā'yel. We had just passed a well near the angle of a garden wall, when we saw a man whose garb and appearance at once bespoke him for a muleteer of the north, watering a couple of mules at the pool hard by. Barakāt and I stared with astonishment, and could hardly believe our eyes. For since the day we left the 'Ashja'yeeyah of Gaza for the south-eastern desert, we had never met with a like dress nor with these animals; and how then came they here? But there was no mistaking either the man or the beasts, and as the muleteer raised his head to look at the passers-by, he also started at our sight, and evidently recognized in us something that took him unawares. But the riddle was soon solved. A few paces farther on, our way opened out on the great plain that lies immediately under the town walls to the north. This space was now covered with tents and thronged with men of foreign dress and bearing, mixed with Arabs of town and desert, women and children, talking and quarrelling, buying and selling, going and coming; everywhere baskets full of dates and vegetables, platters bearing eggs and butter, milk and whey, meat hung on poles, bundles of firewood, &c. &c., stood ranged in rows, horsemen and camel-men were riding about between groups seated round fires or reclining against their baggage; in the midst of all this medley a gilt ball surmounted a large white pavilion of a make that I had not seen since last I left India some eleven years before, and numerous smaller tents of striped cloth and certainly not of Arab fashion clustered around; a lively scene, especially of a clear morning, but requiring some explanation from its exotic and non-Arab character.

These tents belonged to the great caravan of Persian pilgrims, on their return from Medinah to Meshid 'Alee by the road of Kāseem, and hence all this unusual concourse and bustle. Tāj-Djehān, the relict of 'Asaph Dowlah, a name familiar to Anglo-Bengalee readers, was the principal personage in the band, and hers was the gilt-topped tent. Several Indians of Lucknow and Delhi, relatives or attendants, were in her train, and to her litter appertained the mules and muleteer whose apparition had so amazed us. The rest of the caravan was composed partly of Persians proper, natives of Shīrāz, Ispahan, and other Iranian towns, and partly of a still larger number belonging to the hybrid race that forms the Shiya'ee population of Meshid 'Alee,

Kerbelah, and Bagdad. All of course were of the sect just mentioned, though very diverse in national origin. Along with them, and belonging to the first or genuine Persian category, was a personage scarcely less important than the Begum herself, namely, Moḥammed-'Alee-esh-Shirāzee, native of Shirāz, as his denomination implies, and representative of the Persian government at Meshid 'Alee, actually commissioned by orders from Teheran with the unenviable office of director or headman in this laborious and not over-safe pilgrimage. With him and with his retinue we shall soon become very intimately acquainted. The total of the caravan amounted to two hundred, or rather more.

They had assembled at Ri'ād in Nejēd, where they had arrived, some from the northerly rendezvous of Meshid 'Alee, and others from that of Aboo-Shahr (often corrupted on maps into Bushire), whence they had crossed the Persian Gulf to the port of 'Ojeyr, and thus passed on to Hofhoof and Ri'ād. Here Feyṣul, after exacting the exorbitant sum which Wahnābee orthodoxy claims from Shiya'ee heretics as the price of permission to visit the sacred city and the tomb of the Prophet, had assigned them for guide and leader one 'Abd-el-'Azeez-Aboo-Boṭeyn, a Nejdean of the Nejdeans, who was to conduct and plunder them in the name of God and the true faith all the rest of the way to Mecca and back again.

I mentioned in a former chapter the negotiations carried on by Ṭelāl with the Persian government to obtain the passage of this annual caravan through his own dominions, and I related his partial success and liberal conduct towards the few whose good luck led them by the northern route through Ḥā'yel. But the way by Central Nejēd is more direct, and for that reason preferable for the Persians, on condition of having tolerable immunity from danger and pillage. Thus, in order to spare the expenses and fatigues of a comparatively roundabout track, though after all the difference between the two roads does not exceed six or eight days, they had consented to compound for the payment of a fixed sum to the Wahnābee autocrat, and to rely on his honour for a safe passage and needful assistance.

Feyṣul, overjoyed to draw this additional silver stream to his mill, waived the motives of bigotry and national hatred which had more than once led his predecessors to refuse the most

advantageous offers when made by heretics. Indeed, "for a consideration" he would probably have furnished the Devil himself with passport, camel, and guide. Still he felt himself bound in conscience to make the unbelievers pay roundly for the negative good treatment which he thus consented to afford, and took his measures accordingly.

Forty gold tomāns were fixed as the claim of the Wahnābee treasury on every Persian pilgrim for his passage through Ri'ād, and forty more for a safe-conduct through the rest of the empire; eighty in all. On his side Feyṣul was to furnish from among his own men a guide invested with absolute power in whatever regarded the special arrangement of the march, and we may without any breach of charity suppose that the king's servant could not do less than imitate the good example of his master in fleecing the heretics to the best of his ability. Every local governor on the way would naturally enough take the hint, and strive not to let the "enemies of God" (for this is the sole title given by Wahnābees to all except themselves) go by without spoiling them more or less. So that, all counted up, the legal and necessary dues levied on every Persian Shiya'ee while traversing Central Arabia and under Wahnābee guidance and protection, amounted, I found, to about one hundred and fifty gold tomāns, equalling nearly sixty pounds sterling English, no light expenditure for a Persian, and no despicable gain to an Arab.

But besides this, seeming casualties might occur, helping to shear the wool still closer, nay, sometimes taking off the skin altogether. Such was the case with the hapless Persians at the very time of our meeting. Their conductor, Aboo-Boṭeyn, had taken from them whatever custom entitled him to by way of advanced payment, and charged the disconsolate Tāj-Djehān more especially at the rate of her supposed wealth rather than of any fixed precedent. But he had done more, and by dint of threats and bullying of all descriptions, including blows administered by his orders to the Persian commissioner, Moḥammed 'Alee himself, and in his own tent, had managed to get countless extras out of those entrusted to his guidance, till he had filled his saddle-bags with tomāns, and loaded his camels with plunder. But on his return along with his injured *protégés* from Medinah, whither he had led them to complete their devotion



and his profit, he began to fear lest they should lodge a complaint against him at Bereyдах, which lay on their road, the more so that Moḥammed, Feysul's third son, was now there in person, and that he should ultimately be forced to refund his ill-gotten wealth, not, indeed, to its Shiya'ee owners, for of that there was little danger under Wahnābee arbitration, but to the Ri'ād treasury; while he himself might come in for an awkward impeachment for embezzling what in Feysul's eyes should be for the common benefit of the "faithful." Probably his fears were not wholly groundless; but at the worst a few presents conveyed in time to Mohanna, the governor of Bereyдах, to Moḥammed, and to his royal father, would assuredly have "made all well again." But to this sacrifice Aboo-Boṭeyn's grasping avarice could not consent, and in compliance with its dictates he resolved on the very worst course possible for him, namely, that of anticipating investigation by flight. So when the pilgrims arrived at 'Eyoon, the same village where we supped with Foleyḥ two nights since, 'Aboo-Boṭeyn absconded, money and all, and took refuge in the rebel town of 'Oneyzah, leaving Tāj-Djehān, Moḥammed 'Alee, and the rest, to find their way out of Arabia by themselves as best they might.

"For a consideration," the good folks of 'Eyoon guided the distracted pilgrims to Bereyдах. But misfortunes "come not single spies;" and the Persians had now to exemplify a certain ill-omened proverb touching the frying-pan and the fire. At Bereyдах they had fallen into the clutches of a genuine Wahnābee, and lay at the tender mercies of the most wicked and heartless of all Nejdean governors, Mohanna-el-'Anezee.

This was that same Mohanna whom 'Abd-Allah, the son of Feysul, had some years before nominated vice-ruler of Bereyдах and Ḳaseem, after the massacre of the 'Aley'yān family. Mohanna had in every respect come up to his master's desires, and followed in his footsteps. Every imaginable means was employed by this shrewd and bad man to break the spirit of Ḳaseem, to exhaust its resources, and to extinguish the last sparks of liberty. All the Wahnābee regulations against silk, tobacco, ornaments, and so forth, were rigorously enforced, to the ruin of commerce, while the richest merchants and busiest traders were, by a system of which Ḥaṣa will soon furnish us



with a yet more striking example, taken away at a moment's notice from their counters and warehouses, to hang a matchlock on their unwilling shoulders, gird on a sword whose use they had well-nigh forgotten, and mount on ever-recurring Wahhābee expeditions against the enemies of God and the faith, that is, most often against their own yet independent countrymen, till all of them had lost their trade, and many their lives. Meanwhile Mohanna gratified his own personal rapacity, even more than the spiteful feelings of his employer, by fines, exactions, and mostly involuntary contributions, on every pretext and on every occasion; and confident that some little private speculation might well be excused in so valuable a servant of government, he accumulated to his own uses more wealth than Ḳaseem had ever seen in the hands of one single individual, however absolute. But justly careful not to put the good cause in danger of losing his personal services, he never went himself on the expeditions in which he jeopardized the unimportant lives of the Ḳaseem "polytheists"—for so their conquerors still designate them—and remained at home to brood over his money-bags while others gathered the money for him on the scene of danger.

At this man's orders were now Tāj-Djehān and her fellow-pilgrims. He had already before our arrival detained them a good fortnight under the walls of Bereyдах, while he put every engine of extortion into play against them, and awaited from Feysul some further hint as to the conduct he was to hold with these "enemies of God."

Passing a little on to the east, we left the crowded encampment on one side and turned to enter the city gates. Here, and this is generally the case in the larger Arab towns of old date, the fortifications surround houses alone, and the gardens all lie without, sometimes defended—at 'Oneyzah, for example—by a second outer girdle of walls and towers, but sometimes, as at Bereyдах, devoid of any mural protection. The town itself is composed exclusively of streets, houses, and market-places, and bears in consequence a more regular appearance than the recent and village-like arrangements of the Djowf and even of Ḥā'yel. We passed a few streets, tolerably large but crooked, and then made the camels kneel down in a little square or public place, where I remained seated by them on the baggage,

switch in hand, like an ordinary Arab traveller, and Barakāt with Mubārek went in search of lodgings.

Very long did the half-hour seem to me during which I had thus to mount guard till my companions returned from their quest ; the streets were full of people, and a disagreeable crowd of the lower sort was every moment collecting round myself and my camels, with all the inquisitiveness of the idle and vulgar in every land. Nor was it always easy for me, thus "beset and sprited" with more fools than ever Imogen was, to keep up the equanimity of temper and sedate reserve proper to well-bred Arabs on such occasions. At last my companions came back to say that they had found what they wanted ; a kick or two brought the camels on their legs again, and we moved off to our new quarters.

The house in question was hardly more than five minutes' walk from the north gate, and at about an equal distance only from the great market-place on the other side. Its position was therefore good. It possessed two large rooms on the ground storey, and three smaller, besides a spacious courtyard surrounded by high walls. A winding stair of irregular steps and badly lighted, like all in the Nejed, led up to an extent of flat roof, girt round by a parapet six feet high, and divided into two compartments by a cross-wall, thus affording a very tolerable place for occupation morning and evening, at the hours when the side-walls might yet project enough shade to shelter those seated alongside of them, besides an excellent sleeping-place for night. The entire building was old, of perhaps two hundred years or more, solid, and with some pretensions to symmetry in its parts ; the doors were of massive and carved Ithel-wood, and a fireplace in one of the rooms below evidently marked it out for a kitchen. Another tolerably spacious apartment of oblong shape was a K'hāwah or parlour ; the little rooms had been tenanted by the ladies of the mansion, who now, with the rest of the family, moved off to take up their abode next door.

The owner now arrived to greet us, keys in hand. Ahmed was his name, a good-humoured man, but sly, and inclined to drive a hard bargain with the strangers. However, my associates, both quite as shrewd as he, soon reduced his terms within reasonable limits, and I think that a Londoner will

hardly consider eighteen-pence per month a very exorbitant house rent, especially for the comfortable accommodations just described. All extras of repair and arrangement, if necessary, were to fall on the proprietor, who had also to find us in water, though subsequently out of our own free generosity we rewarded the sun-burnt nymph who brought it daily from the well for her laborious services.

In this domicile then we arranged ourselves and chattels, and after partaking in common a morning meal of friendship with the owner of the house and Mubārek, the latter took his leave and returned home to Doweerah.

He parted from us with a promise of supplying us with beasts, and taking us on to Ri'ād. But he had no real intention of doing so, it was merely a discreet evasion to avoid the discourtesy of a positive "I will not," or of its equivalent "I cannot." Such unwillingness to appear unwilling is among Arabs a frequent source of innocent deceptions, if deceptions indeed they can be termed, like the "not at home," or "slightly indisposed" of our own land; whoever has to do with Easterns should be prepared for them, and take them good-naturedly. We were now no novices in the country, and had already conjectured that Mubārek was no more likely to keep his word than we to take it. Accordingly we tried other individuals, and hardly had we been installed in our rooms than we began to seek right and left the means of leaving them. But no one offered himself or his camels, while we, for our part, could not distinctly see whence this reluctance arose. At last we resolved to apply to Mohanna himself, with whose character we were as yet but imperfectly acquainted, for our cautious neighbours and companions had not entrusted to our untried ears all the details with which my readers are already conversant; we only learned them in process of time and through various channels.

With this intention we enquired what was the best time for visiting the governor, and were informed that, unlike Coriolanus, his reception hours were before breakfast, namely, about sunrise or not much later. So, on the third morning after our arrival, we betook ourselves to his palace, with the intention of engaging him to the friendly office of finding us guides and companions for our journey to the 'Aared. Mohanna lived in the old castle, situated in the north-east quarter of the town, and a little



within the walls ; it covers a large extent of space, to which its height does not sufficiently correspond, and it looks in fact more like a huge collection of outhouses than a palace, with little symmetry or order to show. Some portions of it are ancient, that is, of four or five hundred years' date, at a rough estimate ; for Arab architecture, unlike our own Norman or Gothic, does not chronicle the progress of centuries in line and curve. Massive, ungainly, and imposing from size alone, the main elements of beauty and development, the arch, the capital, the moulding, the frieze, the gable, are either totally absent, or exist only in their most primitive and embryotic form, from which no successive stages have shaped them into grace and perfection. The materials of the construction are almost the only witnesses to its relative antiquity. Stone at an early period, shaped or rough ; stone mixed with earth, as here, later ; earth alone in the Wakhābee cycle ; these are the main tokens to indicate the century that reared the pile. To the first of these three periods belong the castle of Djowf and the Marid tower ; to the second, many buildings of Kaseem, at Bereydaḥ and 'Eyoon, for example ; to the third, Dery'eeyah and Ri'ād. From the highest antiquity down to the Hejirah the first may be assigned ; from the Hejirah to within two hundred years back the second. But east and south of Nejed, new architectural elements, new styles, new progress will appear, and claim special explanation in their place. In the castle of Mohanna, now before us, part belongs to more recent and variable date, but the whole has been put together by chance rather than by design ; some walls of stone, others of earth, part is plastered, part naked. The central edifice is strong, and capable of standing an Arab siege, but not above thirty-five feet in height, nor possessed of a tower ; the great watch-chimney, to give it its most descriptive name, is detached from the castle, and stands at some distance close by the town wall. A high outer gate leads within the first enclosure, a square court full of warehouses and lodgings for camel-drivers and palace servants ; a small and strongly-built doorway gives entrance to that section where the governor dwells in person.

At the moment of our arrival Mohanna was out : he had gone at daybreak to a meeting in the Persian camp, where his present business was to extort a sum equal to nearly six hundred



pounds of English money from Tāj-Djehān, over and above a thousand pounds already wrung out of her and her pilgrim companions. This negotiation absorbed all his thoughts and almost all his time ; for the war, he left it mainly to Feyṣul's younger son, Moḥammed, whose camp we have yet to visit. However, after some waiting at the door with several other expectant visitors, we saw the worthy Nejdean arrive, in deep conversation with his satellites. Slightly acknowledging the salutations of the bystanders he entered the K'hāwah, and we followed with the crowd.

After a brief question and answer, no further notice was ours from Mohanna. He had other things to think of, and the simplicity of our dress did not bespeak us persons of wealth and consideration enough to serve for friends or booty. Coffee was served all round as usual, and immediately after the governor rose to go and look after the "main chance," leaving us seated with the other guests to discuss the nature of his occupations, and the news of the day. At the moment we were rather inclined to feel annoyed at receiving so little notice from one to whom we looked for help, but it was in fact a providential event in our favour. For had Mohanna brought his cunning and rapacity to bear on us, which he certainly would have done under ordinary circumstances, there would have been little likelihood of our reaching Ri'āḍ. Meanwhile we had nothing for it but to return home, whither some respectable townsmen now accompanied us, and from the tone of their conversation we soon learned to think that Mohanna had done us his best favour by neglect.

However, the main difficulty remained unsolved, and all our enquiries about companions for the Nejdean road proved utterly fruitless. For three days more we questioned and cross-questioned, sought high and low, loitered in the streets and by the gates, addressed ourselves to townsmen and Bedouins, but in vain. At last we began to understand the true condition of affairs, and what were the obstacles that choked our way.

The central provinces of Nejed, the genuine Wahnābee country, is to the rest of Arabia a sort of lion's den, on which few venture and yet fewer return. "Hāḍa Nejed ; men dakhelaha f'mā kharaj," "this is Nejed, he who enters it does not come out again," said an elderly inhabitant of whom we had

demanded information; and such is really very often the case. Its mountains, once the fastnesses of robbers and assassins, are at the present day equally or even more formidable as the stronghold of fanatics who consider every one save themselves an infidel or a heretic, and who regard the slaughter of an infidel or a heretic as a duty, at least a merit. In addition to this general cause of anticipating a worse than cold reception in Nejed, wars and bloodshed, aggression and tyranny, have heightened the original antipathy of the surrounding population into special and definite resentment for wrongs received, perhaps inflicted, till Nejed has become for all but her born sons doubly dangerous, and doubly hateful. Hence, not to speak of mere foreigners, Arabs themselves, of whatever race or persuasion, Mahometans or otherwise, inhabitants of Shomer or townsmen of Mecca, from Djowf to Yemen, are very little disposed to venture on the plateaus of Toweyk or to thread Wadi Haneefah, without some strong reason, and under particularly favourable or really urgent circumstances.

But at this time some other superadded difficulties complicated the question, and rendered our researches more and more sterile. The war now raging, the siege and its accompanying ravages, though nominally directed against 'Oneyzah alone, were in reality against the province at large, which had throughout either openly or at least in feeling espoused the cause of the injured town. Bereydah itself, in spite of the presence of Mohanna and his numerous satellites, in spite of the Wahhābee force encamped under its very walls, could hardly be kept from revolt. Every heart and every tongue was enlisted against Feyṣul and in favour of Zāmil, rejoicing in his successes, sympathizing in his reverses. All this was of course no secret to the Nejdean governor and his associates, nor could they be ignorant of the deputations in search of assistance sent now to Mecca and now to Djebel Shomer, and that not only by Zāmil and the garrison of 'Oneyzah, but even by the inhabitants of Rass, of Henākeeyah, and of Bereydah itself. Hence the natives of Qaseem, who were never in odour of sanctity among the Nejdean Wahhābees, now positively, to borrow a scriptural phrase, "did stink among the inhabitants of the land," as the worst of infidels and abettors of infidels, and they for their part were less desirous than ever of crossing the eastern frontier of their province.

There was more yet. By the best construction that could be put on us ourselves and our doings, we were certainly strangers, come from a land stigmatized by the Wahhābees as a hotbed of idolatry and polytheism, subjects too of a hostile and infidel government. To be held for spies of the Ottoman was but a degree better here than to be considered spies of Christian or European governments; and though we might fairly hope to steer clear of the latter imputation, we might readily fall foul of the former. In a word, to introduce such unsavoury individuals into the lands of the Saints was hardly less dangerous to our guidesmen than to ourselves; like the peacock who in Mahometan tradition opened the wicket of Paradise to let the Devil in, and received no inconsiderable share in the Devil's own punishment.

To sum up, we were now in a thorough "fix," and saw no means of getting free. Barred in on every side by causes whose nature and strength we had been taught to appreciate, we knew not whither to turn. Five days of bootless search in town and camp had convinced us that in looking for a guide eastwards we were, to use an Arab proverb, "hunting for the egg of the 'Ankā," or Eastern Phoenix. But we were no less determined not to be beaten, and it was a great relief to notice that after all our running about no one seemed to entertain the least suspicion or ill-will regarding us, nor even paid us that exclusive and minute attention which we had hitherto attracted, much more than was comfortable, wherever we had taken up our abode, for the war preoccupied every mind.

At last a door opened, and, which is not seldom the case, exactly where we least expected it, and in so doing furnished us with the means of visiting not Nejed only, but even the more distant regions farther east. This was, in fact, the turning-point of our whole journey, and a seemingly casual meeting facilitated while it modified and extended the remainder of our course from Bereydah to Nejed, from Nejed to 'Omān, from 'Omān back to Bagdad.

It was the sixth day after our arrival, and the 22nd of September, when about noon I was sitting alone and rather melancholy in our K'hāwah, and trying to beguile the time with reading the incomparable Divan of Ebn-el-Farid, the favourite companion of my travels. Barakāt had at my request betaken



himself out of doors, less in hopes of success than to "go to and fro in the earth and walk up and down in it;" nor did I now dare to expect that he would return any wiser than he had set forth. When lo! after a long two hours' absence, he came in with cheerful face, index of good tidings.

Good, indeed, they were, none better. Their bearer said, that after roaming awhile to no purport through the streets and market-place, he had bethought him of a visit to the Persian camp. There, while straying among the tents, "like a washerman's dog," a Hindoo would say, he noticed somewhat aloof from the crowd a small group of pilgrims seated near their baggage on the sand, while curls of smoke going up from amid the circle indicated the presence of a fire, which at that time of day could be for nothing else than coffee. Civilized though Barakāt undoubtedly was, he was yet by blood and heart an Arab, and for an Arab to see coffee-making, and not to put himself in the way of getting a share, would be an act of self-restraint totally unheard of; so he approached the group, and was of course invited to sit down and drink. The party consisted of two wealthy Persians, accompanied by three or four of that class of men, half servants, half companions, who often hook on to travellers at Bagdad or its neighbourhood, besides a mulatto of Arabo-negrine origin, and his master, this last being the leader of the band, and the giver of the aromatic entertainment.

Barakāt's whole attention was at once engrossed by this personage. A remarkably handsome face, of a type evidently not belonging to the Arab Peninsula, long hair curling down to the shoulders, an over-dress of fine-spun silk, somewhat soiled by travel, a coloured handkerchief of Syrian manufacture on the head, a manner and look indicating an education much superior to that ordinary in his class and occupation, a camel-driver's, were peculiarities sufficient of themselves to attract notice, and give rise to conjecture. But when these went along with a welcome and a salute in the forms and tone of Damascus or Aleppo, and a ready flow of that superabundant and overcharged politeness for which the Syrian subjects of the Turkish empire are renowned, Barakāt could no longer doubt that he had a fellow-countryman, and one, too, of some note, before him.

Such was in fact the case. Aboo-'Eysa, to give him the name



by which he was commonly known in these parts, though in his own country he bears another denomination, was a native of Aleppo, and son of a not unimportant individual in that fair city. His education, and the circumstances of his early youth, had rendered him equally conversant with townsmen and herdsmen, with citizens and Bedouins, with Arabs and Europeans. By lineal descent he was a Bedouin, since his grandfather belonged to the Mejādimah, who are themselves an offshoot of the Benoo-Khālīd; but in habits, thoughts, and manners he was a very son of Aleppo, where he had passed the greater part of his boyhood and youth. When about twenty-five years of age, he became involved, culpably or not, in the great conspiracy against the Turkish government which broke out in the Aleppine insurrection of 1852. Like many others he was compelled to anticipate consequences by a prompt flight and a long sojourn far from the white walls of his native city. After a year or more of rambling and adventure, Aboo'Eysa ventured to reappear among his fellow-townsmen, but his goods and those of his family had been plundered or confiscated, and he was now a ruined man. His father, too, had died shortly after the insurrection.

Commerce offered him a means of repairing his losses, and the liberality of a wealthy Israelite friend came in to his aid. He commenced his mercantile career as a travelling commissioner between Aleppo and Bagdad, besides some business on his own score, and sometimes he extended his journeys and his affairs to Baṣrah. Master at last of a considerable sum, he resolved to try his fortune in the Indian horse-trade of the Persian Gulf. This idea was not merely the result of the hope of gain; it had its origin partly in a desire, not unnatural in a Mejādimah, to visit the cradle of his race in Ḥaṣa, and partly in a special passion for the horse, a "penchant" which often remains through life when early years have been familiar with the saddle. In pursuance of his scheme, Aboo'Eysa now shipped himself and his stock in hand at Baṣrah, and sailed to Koweyt, whence on by land through the province of Ḥaṣa. Here he collected a suitable number of horses for the Indian mart, and with them embarked at Baḥreyn, on a ship Bombaywards bound.

But his hopes of wealth and increase were blighted in the

bud by casualties rarely absent from this kind of speculation. I once heard that a prudent Norfolk man, invited to take part in a similar line of business, replied with better sense than grammar, "Horses eats, and horses dies, and I will have nothing to do with things as eats and things as dies." Die Aboo-'Eysa's horses certainly did of some epidemic disease that assailed the animal cargo of the ship, and before he set foot on Apollo (properly, Pulwar) Bunder, more than half his stud had gone to feed the sharks of the Indian Sea. The survivors were landed in sorry case and stabled in the Fort. But they had come at a wrong season, "gram" was dear, and prices low, and the sale concluded in a dead loss. Aboo-'Eysa returned to Bahreyn without horses and almost without money, and feeling ashamed or afraid to revisit Bagdad and Aleppo in such a plight, thought it more advisable to remain in Ḥaṣa, on the principle of continental residence practised occasionally by gentlemen whose bills are longer than their purses.

In Ḥaṣa he met with a cordial welcome and helpful friends. Nor was this strange, considering his personal good qualities, delicate tact, pleasant conversation, a good head except where money was concerned, and a warm heart—I have seldom known a warmer. Before many months passed at Hofhoof he had by him wherewithal to make a considerable purchase in the fine and highly-valued cloth mantles or 'Abee, which constitute the staple manufacture of that town, and with this capital he tried his commercial luck once more. But here again disappointment awaited him. A cousin of his had tracked him to Ḥaṣa, and to this relative Aboo-'Eysa entrusted his wares for sale at Baṣrah. But when the faithless agent found himself in possession of a large sum, the price of Aboo-'Eysa's goods, he conceived the design of setting up on his own account, and sailed away with the money, to spend his ill-gotten wealth in Kurrachee and Bombay, whence he never returned.

Our unfortunate hero was a third time reduced to utter want, and remained some time in great difficulties. At last he managed to collect a small sum, and invested it in a sword and a few Persian carpets, with which he set off for Ri'ad. Arrived there, he bestowed his purchases in form of presents on Maḥboob, the prime minister of Feyṣul, and on Feyṣul himself. After this preliminary step, he begged of the king a patent,

enabling him to occupy a subordinate post of guide in the annual transport of Persian pilgrims across the Nejed. His request was granted, and he now entered on a new and a more congenial kind of life.

When we met him, he had followed this career for three years. His politeness, easy manners, and strict probity soon gained him a favourable reception among the pilgrims, accustomed to the greedy rapacity and uncourteous bearing of Wahnābee guides. Thus qualified for his office, he had before long a large band of pilgrims at his back, and attained a degree of wealth above whatever he possessed on his first arrival at Hofhoof. Meanwhile his frequent journeys backwards and forwards through the very heart of Arabia enabled him to increase his already numerous acquaintance by that of the central chiefs, townsmen, or Bedouins, to whom his lavish generosity rendered him peculiarly acceptable. His coffee was always on the fire, his tobacco-pouch invariably open, his supper at the mercy of every neighbour. He seemed, in fact—and of this I can speak after personal experience—in a hurry to throw away on his friends whatever he had acquired, nor was that little.

His ordinary residence, when not engaged on a journey or conducting pilgrims, was at Hofhoof, the capital of Ḥaṣa; an abode which placed him at a convenient distance from his Wahnābee employers, whose strait-laced exclusiveness he disliked and ridiculed, while they on their part were liable to take scandal at his tobacco-smoking, silk-wearing latitudinarianism, if brought too often under their immediate notice. Having completed his business with the caravan, henceforth their paths had to separate, for while the Persians were bound for the neighbourhood of Meshid 'Alee by the north-eastern road, Aboo-'Eysa's goal lay at Hofhoof, where his wife, an Abyssinian woman, and his son, awaited him at home. Hence he had to follow the south-eastern path right across Nejed, and exactly where we ourselves desired to penetrate it; a circumstance which facilitated his becoming our guide, in case we proposed it.

Other circumstances also coincided in predisposing him to take us in his company. Hardly had he set his eyes on Barakāt than the recognition, so far as country went, was



mutual, and Aboo'Eysa, long accustomed to all classes and descriptions of Syrians between Gaza and Aleppo, readily perceived that his new acquaintance was something more and better than what he gave himself out for. Accordingly he received him with marked politeness, and carefully informed himself of our whence and whither. Barakāt, overjoyed to find at last a kind of opening after difficulties that had appeared to obstruct all further progress, made no delay in enquiring whether he would undertake our guidance to Ri'āḍ. Aboo'Eysa replied that he was just on the point of separating from his friends the Persians, whose departure would leave camels enough and to spare at his disposition, and that so far there was no hindrance to the proposal. As for the Wahnābees and their unwillingness to admit strangers within their limits, he stated himself to be well known to them, and that in his company we should have nothing to fear from their suspicious criticism. Barakāt next requested to know the hire of his beasts, and Aboo'Eysa in return named so low a price, barely half in fact that we had paid from Hā'yel to Ḳaseem, though the distance before us was greater by a third, that no doubt remained of his being no less desirous of our society than we of his. He added that in two or three days at most he would be ready to start.

Better news could not be imagined, and Barakāt hastened to impart it to me ; but before quitting his new acquaintance, of his own authority he invited Aboo'Eysa to supper with us the same evening, hoping thus to render the engagement surer, and to give room for increase of knowledge on both sides.

We now made our preparations for the repast, and bought, a rare occurrence with us, a good piece of meat, which Barakāt cooked in Syrian rather than in Arab fashion. Dates and butter in a lordly dish were not wanting, and since the women of Bereydah have learnt from the Persians the art of making leavened bread, that luxury, too, adorned our board. Altogether one might call it a very excellent meal for Ḳaseem. Of course the two Persians, Aboo'Eysa's companions, had also been asked, for to invite one of a band and leave out the rest would be here considered the height of shabbiness ; our host Aḥmed obligingly furnished cooking utensils and dishes, and



was in recompense bidden to the party. Lastly, two respectable townsmen who had often honoured us with their visits were summoned to complete the convivial circle. Our K'hawah was large enough for all, and we were in a generous humour.

Towards evening Aboo-'Eysa arrived. He entered with the easy and quiet air of a gentleman, and at once joined in conversation without the smallest embarrassment. I was much at a loss to read his riddle; his manner was not that either of a townsman or of a Bedouin, of a Mahometan or of a Christian; it partook of all, yet belonged to none; a manly face, but marked with that half-feminine delicacy of expression which, for example's sake, may be noticed in the portraits of Nelson, Rodney, and some other distinguished men of the eighteenth century; intelligent speech, yet betraying considerable ignorance on many points of school education; a negligent display of dress and bearing; a dialect which at one moment reminded me of Syria, at another of Nejed, and sometimes of the desert; all contributed to puzzle me regarding the real origin and character of our intended guide. My readers, previously informed of what we only learnt afterwards and by degrees, can more easily understand in the chequered history of Aboo-'Eysa the causes and explanation of these complicated features. Much, too, in the man was individual, and the result of natural disposition no less than circumstances, indeed in spite of them. Certainly a roving life is no good school for probity in dealings, nor for delicate morality in private conduct. Yet Aboo-'Eysa possessed both these qualities in a degree that drew on him the admiration of many, the derision of some, and the notice of all. No one had ever heard from his lips any of those coarse jests and *double entendres* so common even among the better sort of Arabs in their freer hours, and his life was of a no less exemplary correctness than his language. Not a suspicion of libertinism had ever attached itself to him; at home or on his journeys he was and always had been a faithful and (though wealthy) a monogamous husband. Equally known for unblemished honour in money transactions, he had never contested or delayed the payment of a debt, and his partners in business bore unanimous witness to his scrupulous fidelity. This very truthfulness of disposition led him indeed not seldom to place a too implicit confidence in the agents to whom he entrusted his affairs or his

money, nor did experience of the past seem in general much to open his eyes in this respect for the future till it was too late, nor the treachery of an old friend lead him to distrust a new, though equally undeserving. An intimate acquaintance, prolonged through many and eventful months, gave us ample opportunity for observing these peculiarities in Aboo-'Eysa's conduct and character. Meanwhile I trust that my readers will excuse this minute description of the outer and inner man of one whose share in our journey was henceforth so important.

We sat down to a very joyous supper, and the conversation never flagged. Before dark, Aboo-'Eysa and the Persians took leave, to return to their camels and baggage, while the townsmen of Bereydah congratulated us on having secured so good a guide and companion ; all knew him, and bore unexceptionable witness to his integrity and ability, though all equally professed themselves in the dark respecting his real origin, or what had been his life and pursuits before his appearance in Arabia.

Thus at rest on the main question of our journey, Barakāt and I had leisure to examine the town, and to take notice of what lay within and without its walls. Perhaps my readers will not think it loss of time to accompany us on a morning visit to the camp and market, to the village gardens and wells ; such visits we often paid, not without interest and pleasure.

Warm though Ḳaseem is, its mornings, at least at this time of year (the latter part of September), were delightful. In a pure and mistless sky the sun rises over the measureless plain, while the early breeze is yet cool and invigorating, a privilege enjoyed almost invariably in Arabia, but wanting too often in Egypt on the west, and India on the east. At this hour we would often thread the streets by which we had first entered the town, and go out betimes to the Persian camp, where all was already alive and stirring. Here are ranged on the sand, baskets full of eggs and dates, flanked by piles of bread and little round cakes of white butter, bundles of fire-wood are heaped up close by, and pails of goat's or camel's milk abound, and amid all these sit rows of countrywomen, haggling with tall Persians or with the dusky servants of Tāj-Djehān, who in

broken Arabic try to beat down the prices, and generally end by paying only double of what they ought. The swaggering broad-faced Bagdad camel-drivers, and the ill-looking fallow youths of Meshid-'Alee, every mother's son a Hoseyn or an 'Alee, so narrow is Shiya'ee nomenclature, stand 'idle everywhere, talking downright ribaldry, insulting those whom they dare, and cringing to their betters like slaves. Persian gentlemen, too, with grand hooked noses, high caps, and quaintly-cut dresses of gay patterns, saunter about discussing their grievances, or quarrelling with each other, to pass the time. For, unlike an Arab, a Persian shows at once whatever ill-humour he may feel, and has no shame in giving it utterance before whomever may be present, nor does he with the Arab consider patience to be an essential point of politeness and dignity. Not a few BereyDAH townsmen are here, chatting or bartering, and Bedouins switch in hand. If you ask any chance individual among these latter what has brought him hither, you may be sure beforehand that the word "camel," in one or other of its forms of detail, will find place in the answer. Criers are going up and down the camp with articles of Persian apparel, cooking-pots, and ornaments of various description in their hands, or carrying them off for higher bidding to the town. For what between the extortions of Mohanna, and the daily growing expenses of so long a sojourn at BereyDAH, the Persians were rapidly coming to an end of their long purses and short wits, and had begun selling off whatever absolute necessity could dispense with as superfluous, to obtain wherewithal to buy a dish of milk or a bundle of firewood. Hence their appearance was a ludicrous mixture of the gay and ragged, of the insolence of wealth and the anxious cringe of want; they were, in short, gentlemen in very reduced circumstances, and looked what they were.

Barakāt and myself have made our morning household purchases at the fair, and the sun being now an hour or more above the horizon, we think it time to visit the market-place of the town, which would hardly be open sooner. We re-enter the city gate, and pass on our way by our house door, where we leave our bundle of eatables, and regain the high street of BereyDAH. Before long we reach a high arch across the road; this gate divides the market from the rest of the quarter. We

enter: first of all we see a long range of butchers' shops on either side, thick hung with flesh of sheep and camel, and very dirtily kept. Were not the air pure and the climate healthy, the plague would assuredly be endemic here; but in Arabia no special harm seems to follow. We hasten on, and next pass a series of cloth and linen warehouses, stocked partly with home manufacture, but more imported; Bagdad cloaks and head-gear for instance, Syrian shawls and Egyptian slippers. Here markets follow the law general throughout the East, that all shops or stores of the same description should be clustered together, a system whose advantages on the whole outweigh its inconveniences, at least for small towns like these. In the large cities and capitals of Europe, greater extent of locality requires evidently a different method of arrangement; it might be awkward for the inhabitants of Hyde Park were no hatters to be found nearer than the Tower. But what is Bereydah compared even with a second-rate European city? However, in a crowd, it yields to none: the streets at this time of the day are thronged to choking, and to make matters worse a huge splay-footed camel comes every now and then heaving from side to side like a lubber-rowed boat, with a long beam on his back menacing the heads of those in the way, or with two enormous loads of fire-wood each as large as himself, sweeping the road before him of men, women, and children, while the driver, high-perched on the hump, regards such trifles with the most supreme indifference, so long as he brushes his path open. Sometimes there is a whole string of these beasts, the head rope of each tied to the crupper of his precursor, very uncomfortable passengers when met with at a narrow turning.

Through such obstacles we have found or made our way, and are now amid leather and shoemakers' shops, then among copper and iron smiths, whose united clang might waken the dead or kill the living, till at last we emerge on the central town-square, not a bad one either, nor very irregular, considering that it is in *Ḳaseem*. About half one side is taken up by the great mosque, an edifice near two centuries old, judging by its style and appearance, but it bears on no part of it either date or inscription. This is, according to my experience, a universal rule among the constructions of Central and Eastern Arabia; neither Cufic, nor Himyarite, nor Arabic writings ap-



pear on lintel or column, a want which much disappointed me, nor could I well understand whence this dearth of memorials, especially when contrasted with the abundance of inscriptions in Ḥauran and Ṣafa, Palmyra and Babylon. Coloured writings daubed on walls and over gates are indeed common, but such inscriptions can, it is evident, be only of a few years' standing. Nor does the dearth of stone-graving come from want of skill, since architectural carving is frequent, though rude, in Nejed, while throughout 'Omān this and other ornamental arts are cultivated with no despicable success.

The minaret of this mosque is very lofty—a proof, among many others, that its date reaches farther back than the first Wahhābee domination, for the Nejdean sect does not approve of high minarets, from the all-sufficient reason that they did not exist in the time of Mahomet (true conservatives!), and they accordingly content themselves with a little corner turret, barely exceeding in height the rest of the roof. A crack running up one side of the tower bears witness to an earthquake said to have occurred here about thirty years since, probably the same of which we subsequently found traces in Ḥaṣa. The arch, and consequently the vault, are here unknown; hence the pillars that upbear the mosque roof are close to each other and very numerous. They are of stone.

Another side of the square is formed by an open gallery, reminding me of those at Bologna. In its shade groups of citizens are seated discussing news or business. The central space is occupied by camels and by bales of various goods, among which the coffee of Yemen, henna, and saffron, bear a large part. However, at the period of our arrival, commerce was unusually languid, owing to the war, whose occupations absorbed a considerable portion of the population itself, while they also rendered the roads unsafe for traders and travellers.

From this square several diverging streets run out, each containing a market-place for this or that ware, and all ending in portals dividing them from the ordinary habitations. The vegetable and fruit market is very extensive, and kept almost exclusively by women; so are also the shops for grocery and spices. Nor do the fair sex of Bereydaḥ seem a whit inferior to their rougher partners in knowledge of business and thrifty diligence. "Close-handedness besseems a woman no less than

generosity a man," says an Arab poet, unconsciously coinciding with Lance of Verona in his comments on the catalogue of his future spouse's "conditions."

Rocksalt of remarkable purity and whiteness from western Ḳaseem is a common article of sale, and enormous flakes of it, often beautifully crystallized, lay piled up at the shop doors. Sometimes a Persian stood by, trying his skill at purchase or exchange, but these pilgrims were in general shy of entering the town, where, truly, they were not in the best repute. Bedouins are far less frequent here than in the streets of Ḥā'yel; indeed, henceforth they are only to be met with occasionally, and, as it were, by exception. But in compensation, well-dressed, grave-looking townsmen abound; their yellow wands of Sidr or lotus-wood in their hands, and their kerchiefs loosely thrown over their heads, without the band of white or black camel's hair so characteristic in the north. This Aḳḳal or head-band becomes rarer as we approach the centre of the Peninsula, and in the east disappears altogether.

The whole town has an aspect of old but declining prosperity. There are few new houses, but many falling into ruin. The faces, too, of most we meet are serious, and their voices in an undertone. Silk dresses are prohibited by the dominant faction, and tobacco can only be smoked within doors, and by stealth. Every now and then zealous Wahnābee missionaries from Ri'āḍ pay a visit of reform and preaching to unwilling auditors, and disobedience to the customs of the Nejdean sect is noticed and punished, often severely.

If, invited by its owner, we enter one of the houses, we find the interior arrangement somewhat differing from that usual in Djebel Shomer. The towns of Ḳaseem are close built, and space within the walls becomes in proportion more valuable; hence the courtyards are smaller and the rooms narrow; a second storey, too, is common here, whereas at Ḥā'yel it is a rare exception. The abundance of wood in this province renders charcoal superfluous, and the small furnaces of Djowf and Shomer have disappeared, to make room for fireplaces sunk in the floor, with a raised stone rim and dog-irons, exactly like those in use at home before coals and coal-smoke had necessitated chimney-pieces and all the modern nicety of hearths and stoves. Ghada and Markh wood is piled on the irons, and the

coffee, here super-excellent, for the very best of Yemen comes to Kaseem, is prepared on the blaze.

Enough of the town ; the streets are narrow, hot, and dusty ; the day, too, advances ; but the gardens are yet cool. So we dash at a venture through a labyrinth of byways and crossways till we find ourselves in the wide street that, like a boulevard in France, runs immediately along but inside the walls.

Here is a side gate, but half ruined, with great folding doors and no one to open them. The wall of one of the flanking towers has, however, been broken in, and from hence we hope to find an outlet on the gardens outside. We clamber in, and, after mounting a heap of rubbish, once the foot of a winding staircase, have before us a window looking right on the gardens ; fortunately we are not the first to try this short cut, and the truant boys of the town have sufficiently enlarged the aperture and piled up stones on the ground outside to render the passage tolerably easy ; we follow the indication, and in another minute stand in the open air without the walls. The breeze is fresh, and will continue so till noon. Before us are high palm-trees and dark shadows ; the ground is velvet green with the autumn crop of maize and vetches, and intersected by a labyrinth of watercourses, some dry, others flowing ; for the wells are at work.

These wells are much the same throughout Arabia, their only diversity is in size and depth, but their hydraulic machinery is everywhere alike. Over the well's mouth is fixed a cross-beam, supported high in air on pillars of wood or stone on either side, and in this beam are from three to six small wheels, over which pass the ropes of as many large leathern buckets, each containing nearly twice the ordinary English measure. These are let down into the depth, and then drawn up again by camels or asses, who pace slowly backwards and forwards on an inclined plane leading from the edge of the well itself to a pit prolonged for some distance. When the buckets rise to the verge they tilt over, and pour out their contents by a broad channel into a reservoir hard by, from which part the watercourses that irrigate the garden. The supply thus obtained is necessarily discontinuous, and much inferior to what a little more skill in mechanism affords in Egypt and Syria ; while the awkward shaping and not unfrequently the ragged condition of

the buckets themselves, causes half the liquid to fall back into the well before it reaches the brim. The creaking, singing noise of the wheels, the rush of water as the buckets attain their turning-point, the unceasing splash of their overflow dripping back into the source, all are a message of life and moisture very welcome in this dry and stilly region, and may be heard far off amid the sand-hills, a first intimation to the sun-scorched traveller of his approach to a cooler resting-place.

We stroll about in the shade, hide ourselves amid the high maize to smoke a quiet pipe unobserved by prying Nejdean eyes, and then walk on till at some distance we come under a high ridge of sand. Curiosity leads us to climb it, though steep and sliding. From its summit we look south-west in the direction of 'Oneyzah, the whole country between is jotted over with islets of cultivation amid the sands, and far off long lines of denser shade indicate whereabouts 'Oneyzah itself is situated. But noon draws on, and the heat increases; it were ill to remain longer in the blaze of mid-day. So we retrace our steps to the walls, and follow at a venture the town ditch till a gate appears, by which we enter and find our way home again.

Our travelling arrangements with Aboo-'Eysa, which were soon known to all, brought us also frequent visits from the Persian camp. It was highly entertaining to hear these foreigners satirize the land of the Arabs, and extol their own, whereof they invariably tried to give a most prismatic idea. Some of these gentlemen, for gentlemen they were in the scale of Eastern society, knew Arabic fairly well, thanks to frequent residence in Bagdad and its neighbourhood, and took pleasure in literary and historical research.

The military operations, if I may honour them by that name, against 'Oneyzah, afforded an ex-Indian officer another subject of observation and study. In order to become better acquainted with these proceedings, in which the town at large hardly took part, I paid frequent visits to the Nejdean war camp, then pitched to the south of the walls. Here stood an irregular collection of little black tents, often mere rags and tags, stretched out for shade on two or three poles, gipsy fashion; but the space within and around bristled with spears and swarmed with swarthy Nejdeans; their firelocks stood arranged in pyramids, much like our own manner of piling arms,



before and between the lines. Each clan, each province, was encamped apart, and our own observation soon instructed us to distinguish between the quarters of the men of Aflāj, those of Sedeyr, and those of Woshem; amid the latter muskets predominated, amid the first swords and daggers, while the warriors of Sedeyr were more often armed with spears than either class of their comrades. When we passed by the lines, the salutations of the soldiers were short and sulky, and unaccompanied by any friendly invitation; we were not Nejdeans, *ergo*, we were infidels. Besides, the ill-humour of these poor fellows was augmented, and partly excused, by a very biting cause,—hunger; for they had brought with them but a poor stock of provisions, and still less money for purchase, while on the other hand they were not living here at free quarters, and the denizens of Bereydah were by no means inclined to do the handsome towards them. The Nejdeans had reckoned on fattening straightway upon the dates and plunder of 'Oneyzah, but they had reckoned without their host, and hitherto caught nothing but a Tartar; for the troops of Zāmil kept the superiority in the open field, and the relative position of besiegers and besieged was at this moment almost reversed.

One day in the afternoon we heard the alarm-cry raised from the lofty watch-tower of the city, and echoed far away in the plain from other outposts; it was a band of horsemen from 'Oneyzah, who had ventured up to the very neighbourhood of the town and were pillaging the suburbs. Mohanna came out from his counting-house to bid the rest go where glory called; when lo! in a moment streets and market-place were deserted, and every townsman scampered off, not to the field of fame, but to hide himself in his house and lock the outer door, all preferring an "alibi" to the disagreeable dilemma of open disobedience if they refused to arm, or of complying with the appeal, and so having to fight precisely those on whose success their own dearest hopes were staked. However, Mohanna sent his satellites round in time to get together about forty of these reluctant warriors, who, once caught, put the best face on the matter, took their spears and matchlocks, and set out with a heroic determination *not* to fight the enemy. They were joined by a much larger band of the Nejdean soldiers, who, headed by their several chiefs, poured out from their tents with very

different intentions; many of them bore, besides the weapons already mentioned, the short dagger of Yemāmah at their belts, and swords, if not always sharp, heavy, and in resolute hands. Barakāt and I climbed a hillock without the fortifications, whence we had a good view of the plain and skirmish.

The partisans of 'Oneyzah, about half the number of their enemy, were all on horseback, and had scattered themselves here and there among the houses and gardens in the suburbs, doing no harm soever to the persons of the villagers, but busy in collecting what light booty they could lay hold of. On the approach of their assailants they gathered in front of the plantations, and sent out some twenty of theirs to the preliminaries of the fray. The Nejdeans on their side halted and drew up their line. The tactics of an Arab battle are simple, but not wholly devoid of skill. The cavalry come to the front, and provoke the engagement; while the camels and their riders, who form the main body, remain behind in reserve. When the action has once become serious, which is the case so soon as blood has been shed on either side, the camels are made to kneel down, each becoming a kind of fieldwork for two musketeers under his cover, the cavalry open out, and firing begins in good earnest, till flank attacks, or an excess of confidence on one or other side, bring on a general assault; some fight on foot, some mounted, and the *mêlée* continues till either party gives way. The Nejdeans distinguish themselves from the rest of their Arab countrymen by preferring slaughter to booty; they neither take nor ask for quarter, and so long as there are men to kill, pay no attention to plunder. Hence, where Nejdeans lead the battle hot work may be expected, and though six or seven hundred killed on the field may seem a trifle to Europeans accustomed to the thousands of Balaclava, or the tens of thousands of Solferino, such a number for Arabs is much, and, indeed, is supplied by Nejdean warfare alone. Elsewhere two killed and three wounded is generally the outside, much like the battles of Italian municipalities in the middle ages, nor totally dissimilar from some of the king and commonwealth frays during the first years of our own great civil broil in the seventeenth century.

The horsemen of Bereyдах answer the challenge of the enemy by galloping forward some one way, some another, but never

straight to their opponents ; while the Nejdeans, having for the most only camels under them, are obliged to await the results. Three or four of them are, however, on horseback, and these naturally take the lead. A very pretty display of equestrian skill follows, with a dropping fire of matchlocks ; but the men of Kaseem, whether from 'Oneyzah or Bereydah, understand each other, and have made up their mind beforehand that neither bullet nor spear-point of theirs shall hurt their countrymen. So they wheel round and round like swallows over a lake, till the Nejdeans lose patience, and advance their whole line. Then the warriors of 'Oneyzah, seeing the business take a serious turn, and that they are likely to be immediately outnumbered, disappear one by one among the palm-groves in their rear, keeping a good show to the last, but putting the trees between themselves and their foe long before the old-fashioned guns can send a ball within reach of them. Hereon the fray ends, for want of an enemy, and the heroes of Bereydah amuse themselves with a sham fight and much careering and hallooing on their way back to the town, which they enter after about four hours' absence, with "happily no lives lost," as the next morning paper would have it, did morning papers here exist. On their return the hidden townsmen suddenly reappear, and the streets are filled as usual.

Our evenings passed usually in very pleasant guise ; after supper, invariably here and elsewhere throughout Arabia at sunset, we would betake ourselves to the flat house-roof, along with Abou-'Eysa and other acquaintances from camp or town, and there smoke and talk for hours, or listen to the call to night-prayers from the Persian tents, sounding melodious and full among the harsh voices of the Arabs. I know not whether any of my readers labour under the agreeable delusion that Arabia is a land of song ; perhaps no country in the world has less harmony to boast, unless, indeed, it be China ; but I have never had the good fortune of hearing a Chinese performer, only they do not look musical. However, I have heard Turks, Persians, Indians of all sorts, and negroes sing, not to mention Syrians, Armenians, Greeks, and the like ; and can bear witness to them that one and all they far surpass the sons of Kaḥṭān or Ismael in this accomplishment, both for voice and ear, for instrumental and for vocal music. Not that my friends the Arabs are of the

same opinion ; on the contrary, they imagine themselves perfect masters of song, and often deafen the too-courteous listener with screeches meant for airs, and torture him with nasalities supposed to be harmonious. The worst of all are the Bedouins ; and the enthusiasm of even a French philo-Oriental traveller would be hard tried by a nomade howling out at his ear " Aboo-Zeyd," the favourite Bedouin chaunt, on a hot day. The townsmen are little better, and in all cases the greatest favour to be begged of an Arab vocalist is his silence.

On the other hand, the Persians have commonly good voices, and a true feeling of harmony. Their music, if not equal to the European standard, is at least pleasing, though, like most Asiatic melodies, somewhat melancholy. Their neighbours of Bagdad, indeed the inhabitants of the entire valley of the Tigris from Başrah to Diar-Bekr, partake more or less of their ear and voice, and a Bagdad singer will often make a large fortune in distant towns. A dash of music is to be found in Syria also, especially among the Damascenes, and next after them among the denizens of the sea-coast at Şeyda, 'Akka, and the rest. The Turks are tolerably good songsters, but their airs are in general livelier, and approach nearer to the European.

Many were the topics canvassed in our quiet circle while seated under the "heaven over heaven" of an Arab night, and hearkening to the shrill voices of the town, or the distant and more harmonious call of the Persian Mu'edḍin. Government and religion, medicine and commerce, passed in review, plans and schemes, some already realized, some destined to lasting abortiveness, till the late hour sent our friends back to their houses to sleep, and we remained to pass our night on the cooler terrace.

The zodiacal light, always discernible in these transparent skies, but now at its full equinoctial display, would linger cone-like in the west for full three hours after sunset, perfectly distinct in colour, shape, and direction from the last horizontal glimmer of daylight ; while its re-appearance in the east long before morning could only be confounded by inexperience with the early dawn. Shooting stars glided over the vault, yet not more numerous I think than in Europe, did the clouds and mists of our northern climate permit them to be equally visible there. All night long, the watchmen on the towers cried and



answered at intervals, "Allahu Akbar," now the password of their province, and the city slept dark below with its silent groves and sands around. Remembrances of India and Syria, of Europe and home, now seemed as if belonging to another planet, or the indistinct unreality of a dream; while Arabia and the Kaseem stood out in the definite solidity of actual existence. Now the semblances are reversed; yet at that time, when thinking on the waste of intervening deserts and seas yet to traverse, I hardly expected that it would again be so. *In memoriam!*

Early in the morning the ringing of mortars and pestles in the neighbouring dwellings, where each householder was engaged in preparing his morning coffee, would awaken us to find Aboo-'Eysa already risen and busily pounding away in the courtyard below, where the flickering gleam of the wood-fire mingled with the grey twilight of dawn. No Arab, however good his condition, thinks himself above coffee-making; indeed it is more fashionable for a gentleman to prepare in person this beverage than to leave the operation to an inferior or slave.

During our prolonged delay at Bereydaḥ we occasionally left the town for a day's visit to the neighbouring villages of 'Askha, Muḍneb, and others, the better to study rural life in Kaseem. I have already sufficiently described a country dwelling in what I related of our day's repose in the suburb of Doweyr under the arbour and roof-tree of Mubārek, and thus I need not again enter into details touching the houses of the peasantry, for they are all very uniform and on the same pattern, differing only in size. The villages themselves are clean and pleasant, not unlike those of Jafnapatam and Ceylon; and what between shade and water, cool enough considering the southerly latitude. The soil itself belongs in full right to its cultivators, not to the government, as in Turkey; nor is it often in the hands of large proprietors like the Zemindars of India and the wealthier farmers of England. On the other hand, the excessive Wahnābee taxes, if they do not wholly check, at least discourage, the extension of agriculture. The tenth of the produce of the land in dates, corn, maize, and the like, is taken by the government in way of a regular duty, while extraordinary levies also, amounting sometimes to one-third of the harvest value, are repeatedly imposed, above all on the occasion of a "Djihād" or "sacred

war," that is, of any war, for the Wāhhābees are a sacred nation, being the genuine "little flock everywhere spoken against" of Islam, and the real orthodox believers, and no mistake ; hence all their wars are sacred too, so that none but heretics or infidels, or those who would wish to be held for such and treated accordingly, can refuse contribution to their pious campaigns.

Cattle, that is, camels and sheep, are often bred and pastured here, but on a smaller scale than in Shomer, owing to the greater predominance of cultivated over uncultivated land. Yet they form considerable part of the country wealth, and suffice not for home use only, but for export also ; though the sheep are less esteemed by foreign purchasers than the mountain breed of *Toweyk*. Horses too are reared and exported east and north ; they resemble in every respect those of *Djebel Shomer*, and do not pass for real "*Nejdees*." Cows and oxen, none or next to none ; buffaloes, still less. The herdsmen and shepherds are sometimes villagers and sometimes Bedouins ; but the former class has here outgrown in number and importance the latter.

The duty levied on pasture cattle by the government is about a twentieth of their value ; and so far the shepherd in *Ḳaseem* is better off than the ploughman or gardener. But a special town duty on meat makes the tax on beasts almost as heavy in the long run as that exacted on the vegetable kingdom. Money also is taxed, one in forty ; and since it might be difficult for the duty-collector to get a sight of the purse itself, an estimate is made on the average income of each merchant and trader, and they have to pay accordingly. Moreover, members of the commercial class, whether subjects or foreigners, must furnish an import duty on their wares when brought within the frontiers ; the rate is about four shillings a load, a heavy sum because levied on goods of much more bulk in general than costliness. Hence trading fares no better than agriculture or cattle breeding. To all this government absorption, we must add the occasional items of presents, bribes, local extortions, and not unfrequently downright oppression ; after which I leave my readers to judge whether the advantages of the highest dogmatic purity are worth the price paid for them in the more tangible goods of this lower world. The non-Wāhhābee Arabs would, I fear, answer in the negative. Lastly, the frequency of war,

and the obligation of not only contributing to its sinews, but of personally bearing art and part in it, hastens the decay of the province.

With all this my readers must not suppose the Wakhābee government to be an unmixed wrong, or that it offers no good soever to counterbalance or to palliate its manifold disadvantages. Bad though it certainly is, it was preceded, at least in many places, by worse—by utter anarchy, by the feuds of local chieftains, by civil wars among townsmen, and the unrestrained insolence of the Bedouins. Robber and spoiler too the Nejdean ruler is, yet with this redeeming feature, that he reserves all the robbing and spoiling to himself, and suffers no one else, nomade or citizen, to open a private account on his own score. Under Wakhābee rule the wayfarer who now traverses Kaseem, Sedeir, Woshem, and all the other eight provinces of the central empire, will meet but few Bedouins, nor need ever fear those few; merchant and villager, townsman and stranger, are alike freed from predatory inroad and roadside assault; and so far as these rovers are concerned, commerce and cultivation may proceed uninterrupted and unimpaired. No local chief, unless perchance he be one of the Nejdean proconsuls, can trample on the rights of the subject, no village can plunder the gardens or cut down the fruit-trees of its neighbouring hamlet. The whole patent of oppression, general and individual, is reserved to the government, and to the government alone; it is a sacred monopoly, a New Forest on which no one may poach with impunity. Hence, when the inhabitants of Ri'ad in my presence felicitated the Persian Nā'ib, Moḥammed-'Alee, on his safe arrival among them at the capital, and contrasted the bygone perils of Nejdean travelling with the security of the present day, the old Shirazee fox turned to me with a knowing wink, and said, but in Hindoostanee, and in an undertone, "Formerly there were fifty robbers here, now there is only one; but that one is an equivalent for the fifty;" a remark which recalled to my mind the "*ubi solitudinem faciunt, pacem appellunt*" of the Roman annalist.

While on one of our suburban excursions we took the direction of 'Oneyzah, but found it utterly impossible to arrive within its walls; so we contented ourselves with an outside and distant view of this large and populous town; the number of its

houses, and their size, judging by the overtopping summits that marked out the dwelling of Zāmil and his family, far surpassed anything in Bereydah. The outer fortifications are enormously thick, and the girdle of palm-trees between them and the town affords a considerable additional defence to the latter. For all I could see, there is little stonework in the constructions, they appear almost exclusively of unbaked bricks ; yet even so they are formidable defences for Arabia. The whole country around and whatever lay north-east towards Bereydah was more or less ravaged by the war ; and we were blamed by our friends as very rash in having ventured thus far ; in fact, it was a mere chance that we did not fall in with skirmishers or plunderers ; and in such a case the military discipline of Ḳaseem would hardly have ensured our safety.

Two whole weeks had thus passed, a third began, and Aboo-'Eysa was not yet ready to start, nor were the reasons which he at first assigned for this delay wholly satisfactory. At last the true cause of his dilatoriness came to light, and it was of a character to be accepted without blame or necessity for excuse.

Moḥammed-'Alee-esh-Shirāzee, the Persian representative at Meshid 'Alee, and now entrusted with the headmanship of the national pilgrimage, had written "in Arabic and Persian," to Ri'ād, announcing the flight of Aboo-Boṭeyn, and the conduct of Mohanna, and thereon proposing to pay in his own person a visit to the capital, where he would state by word of mouth grievances too many and too serious to be entrusted to pen and ink. Feyṣul would most gladly have dispensed with the offered interview, but he feared lest the Persian should take occasion of a refusal to come to a total rupture, the result of which must be to deprive Nejed of its annual perquisites from the passage of the pilgrims. Accordingly he sent word to Mohanna to provide Moḥammed-'Alee with an escort for his journey to Ri'ād, and to make his arrangements with the other Persians after a manner to ensure their safe return home.

During the interval of these letters to and fro, the governor of Bereydah had wrung out of his Shiya'ee guests a sum amounting on the most moderate calculation to 1,600*l.* sterling, and could hardly now expect further subsidies. He had thus no great interest in detaining them any longer ; whereas to furnish



them with a guide was precisely a handle left in his power for obtaining an additional gain, by a charge laid on the profits attached to such a service. But he was not over-disposed to gratify the Nā'ib (for such was the official title of Moḥammed-'Alee, and by it we will henceforth designate him for brevity's sake) both with guides and beasts of burden, since these he could hardly have supplied otherwise than gratis. So he observed on that point of his instructions a prudent silence, and resolved to oblige the Persian grandee to shift for himself.

The Nā'ib was now in somewhat the same predicament as ours had been, seeking for companions and finding none ; for even the guarantee of a royal invitation was insufficient to remove all doubts touching what reception he might meet in Ri'ād ; nor were the men of Kaseem ambitious of a visit to the Wahhābee capital. At last he had recourse for counsel and help to Abou-'Eysa, with whom he had been on very good terms throughout their previous journey. This latter was willing enough to undertake the office of bear-leader, but he had not then by him enough beasts of burden to suffice for the occasion, and many days went by before he could procure a sufficient number.

Meanwhile the Nā'ib, as was natural, introduced himself to us. He was a thorough Persian, and full sixty years old or even more, but in full vigour of body, and, had he not been an habitual opium-chewer, of mind too ; his beard and whiskers were so carefully dyed with henna and black, that at a little distance he might almost have passed for a man of forty. He spoke Arabic badly, Turkish somewhat better, and Hindoostanee remarkably well, for he had been many years agent of the Persian government at Hyderabad in the Deccan ; very witty and enjoying a joke, verbal or practical, shrewd from long converse with affairs, though, like most Persians too, not difficult to dupe ; talkative and gay, but occasionally yielding to violent and most indecorous fits of passion ; a devout Shiya'ee and adorer of 'Alee and the Mahdee, at the mention of whose name I have seen him prostrate himself full length on the ground ; in a word, he was a "character," and the circumstances of the journey brought him out in every light and every point of view. His attendants, 'Alee, Ḥasan, and the Ḥajj Ḥoseyn, a sort of head-muleteer, had nothing to distinguish them except their

coarseness, their noisy Shiya'ee fanaticism, and their unmeasured declamations against Arabs and Wahnābees, the whole in the corrupt slang dialect of Bagdad and Meshid, presenting a curious contrast with the absolute purity and minute correctness of the language spoken around them. We now became fully acquainted with these men, our destined fellow-travellers to Ri'ad, and our next-door neighbours there ; their visits helped us to pass a time otherwise tedious from hope deferred.

September closed, and then finally Mohanna selected a guide to lead Tāj-Djehān and the associates of her pilgrimage to the banks of Euphrates. The Persians duly paid the price of their deliverance, and departed on the north-western track, having about twenty-five days' march before them, and slender provisions. However, during my stay at Bagdad in the following spring, I was happy to learn that they had all at last arrived in safety.

Aboo'Eysa too, after many delays inseparable from borrowing, found the desired camels, and we now prepared ourselves for the road. But before starting, an unlucky incident took place, sufficient in itself to reveal the weak point of our overconfiding guide. One evening that Aboo'Eysa with his Persian friends were at supper in our house, Habbāsh, an ill-conditioned mulatto servant whom he had taken in tow more from compassion than anything else when leaving Medinah, profited by his master's absence from camp to elope, carrying off with him in his flight Aboo'Eysa's best cloak, some money, and last, not least, the large brass mortar for pounding coffee. Now the mortar was a remarkably fine one, of excellent metal, and used to give out a very melodious bell-like ring when at work, and hence its owner was particularly fond of it, and seldom left it idle. Nor was it easy, or even possible, to find such another one at Bereydah ; and to make matters worse, the loss occurred just when we had a ten days' journey before us, and stood more in need of aromatic solace than ever ; nor had the Nā'ib any similar utensil among his baggage, being, like most of his nation, not a coffee but a tea drinker. The loss of the aforesaid mortar was accordingly "the most unkindest cut of all," and Aboo'Eysa swore that he would have it back at any price. So he sent off two or three friends to hunt after the fugitive Habbāsh and his booty, and then went on the chase himself.

But after two days lost in vain research news came that the thief had been seen on the Medinah road towards Henākeeyah, and so far advanced that no hope remained of catching either him or the mortar. Fortunately I carried about with me a small brazen implement wherein to pound "poisoned poisons" for my patients ; this we now washed out carefully, and applied it to more social uses during our way to the capital, where at last Aboo'Eysa found a supplement if not an equivalent for his loss.

When all was ready for the long-expected departure, it was definitely fixed for the 3rd of October, a Friday, I think, at nightfall. Since our first interview Barakāt and myself had not again presented ourselves before Mohanna, except in chance meetings, accompanied by distant salutations in the street or market-place ; and we did not see any need for paying him a special farewell call. Indeed, after learning who and what he was, we did our best not to draw his grey eye on us, and thereby escaped some additional trouble and surplus duties to pay, nor did any one mention us to him. At star-rise we bade our host and householder Aḥmed a final adieu, and left the town with Aboo'Eysa for our guide.

## CHAPTER VII

## FROM BEREYDAH TO RI'AD

The portion of this world which I at present  
 Have taken up to fill the present sermon,  
 Is one of which there's no description recent;  
 The reason why is easy to determine.

Byron

*Two Routes from Bereydaħ to Ri'ad—We take the Longer—Camels and Dromedaries—Night Travelling—Rowdaħ—Country Hospitality—Uplands—Route across the Nefood—Wāsiṭ—Its Inhabitants—Valley of Zulphah—Night at Zulphah—Gazelles—A Ṣolibah Girl and the Nā'ib—Djebel Ṭoweḳ, its Extent, Character, Direction of its Streams, Climate—Village of Ghāṭ—Sedeḳr Hospitality, Conversation, Tone of Society—The Aḳabah—Plateau of Ṭoweḳ—A Storm—Mejmaa'—'Abd-el-Maḥṣin and his Castle—Tobacco—Route on the Plateau—A Running Stream—Djelājil and Rowdaħ—Meṭeyr Bedouins—Toweym—The Town, its Character and Inhabitants—Insects and Reptiles in Central Arabia—Hafr—Thomeyr—An Adventure in the Village—Ṣolibah Lad—A Garden—Route by Theneeyat—'Aṭalah—Ṣadiḳ—Wooded Country—Hares—Hoolah—Horeymelah—Its Castle—Ibraheem Basha—From Horeymelah to Sedoos—Frontier of 'Aared—Uplands—Wadi Haneefah—Ruins of 'Eyānah—Rowdaħ—Wadi Haneefah continued—Malḳa—Ruins of Deḳey'eeyah—Garden of 'Abd-er-Raḥmān—Road to Ri'ad.*

OUR party assembled close under the walls by the eastern gate, a little to the north of the watch-tower, and not far from the tents of Moḥammed, son of Feyṣul. The Nā'ib now came up with his three companions; Barakāt, Aboo-'Eysa, and myself made three more; Hoṣeyn-el-Baṣree, a gay young merchant from the town whose name he bore, and the two Meccans, who, weary of ill luck at Bereydaħ, had determined to try the doubtful generosity of Feyṣul, completed the number of travellers, ten in all. Besides, as the first stages of our march might possibly expose us to a chance meeting with the predatory



bands of 'Oneyzah, Mohanna had, after much demur, furnished the Nā'ib with a body-guard of three or four matchlock-men, who were to accompany us up to the frontiers of Kaseem.

Two roads lay before us. The shorter, and for that reason the more frequented of the two, led south-east-by-east through Woshem and Wadi Haneefah to Ri'ad. But this track passed through a district often visited at the present moment by the troops of 'Oneyzah and their allies, and hence our companions, not over-courageous for the most, were afraid to follow it. Another road, much more circuitous, but farther removed from the scene of military operations, led north-east to Zulphah, and thence entered the province of Sedeyr, which it traversed in a south-easterly or southern direction, and thus reached the 'Aareḍ. Our council of war resolved on the latter itinerary, nor did we ourselves regret a roundabout which promised to procure us the sight of much that we might scarcely have otherwise an opportunity of visiting. Barakāt and I were mounted on two excellent dromedaries of Abou-'Eysa's stud; the Nā'ib was on a lovely grey she-camel, with a handsome saddle, crimson and gold. The Meccans shared between them a long-backed black beast; the rest were also mounted on camels or dromedaries, since the road before us was impracticable for horses, at any rate at this time of year.

It may be well to make my readers aware once for all of the fact that the popular home idea of a dromedary having two humps, and a camel one, or *vice versa* (for I have forgotten which of the animals is supplied with a duplicate boss in coloured picture-books), is a simple mistake. The camel and the dromedary in Arabia are the same identical genus and creature, excepting that the dromedary is a high-bred camel, and the camel a low-bred dromedary, exactly the same distinction which exists between a race-horse and a hack; both are horses, but the one of blood, the other not. The dromedary is the race-horse of his species, thin, elegant (or comparatively so), fine-haired, light of step, easy of pace, and much more enduring of thirst than the woolly, thick-built, heavy-footed, ungainly, and jolting camel. But both and each of them have only one hump, placed immediately behind their shoulders, where it serves as a fixing-point for the saddle or burden. For the two-humped beast, it exists indeed, but it is neither an Arab dromedary nor camel;

it belongs to the Persian breed, called by the Arabs "Bakhtee" or Bactrian. Perhaps there may be a specimen of it at the Zoological Gardens, and thither who chooses may go and have a look at it, only let him not profane the name of "dromedary" by applying it to the clumsy, coarse-haired, upland Persian beast before him. To see real live dromedaries, my readers must, I fear, come to Arabia, for these animals are not often to be met with elsewhere, not even in Syria; and whoever wishes to contemplate the species in all its beauty must prolong his journey to 'Omān, the most distant corner of the Peninsula, and which is for dromedaries what Nejed is for horses, Cachemire for sheep, and Thibet, I believe, for bulldogs.

Night had fairly set in, but the moon, now in her second quarter, shone bright, and promised us yet seven or eight hours of her lamp. Canopus glittered in all his splendour to the south, and Orion was to rise before long. Off we started at a round pace, and trotted over the sand-hills that girdle in Bereydah, now up, now down, and then on by moonshine among bushes and grass, over hillock and plain, with at times a mass of dark foliage in sight, to indicate where stood some village, but we halted at none. The night air soon cooled into a chill; our party was not at first a very cheerful one. The Nā'ib had parted from Mohanna in a fit of extreme ill humour; his attendants were sulky to keep in tune with their master; the two Meccans could not decide between them which should ride their single camel and which should walk, and by their frequent changes of method reminded me of the farmer and his son going with their ass to market, only with less equability of temper; and Aboo-'Eysa was making ineffectual attempts to enliven the party, though he, too, had not wholly recovered from the annoyance consequent on the disappearance of his servant and coffee-mortar. The Nejdeans kept aloof, looking on us conjointly as a pack of reprobates, whom they would more gladly plunder than escort. Lastly, Barakāt and myself were not without anxiety touching what might lie before us at Ri'ad, so dismal had been the tales recounted to us in Kaseem about the Wahnabee capital, its rulers and people.

But sad or merry, we were now embarked, and on we went in speed and silence. At last the moon lowered, reddened, and

then obliquely sank, while we began to hope for the rest and sleep that all stood much in need of. However, Aboo-Eysa, who preferred encamping in the neighbourhood of habitations to a desert bivouac, despised our expostulations, and made us push on in spite of weariness, till about an hour before day-break, and just at the period of night when the darkness is darkest, we suddenly found ourselves on the edge of deep water-channels and standing maize, while high walls loomed through the obscurity beyond. It was Roweydah, a small village, but well provided with irrigation, and the gardens before us were the private property of Mohanna, who had planted and arranged them during his presidency in the province. Here we were to halt, and try what hospitality the inhabitants would show.

Some one way, some another, for between darkness and drowsiness we went at it like drunken men, after much shouting and splashing we floundered through and out of the watery labyrinth, and reached the high village gate. There we entered, and discovered what looked like a castle on the one side, with an open space on the other. In this latter we flung ourselves down on the ground, without further questions, to sleep, and I hope that Aboo'Eysa looked after the baggage, for we certainly did not.

Two hours of morning nap after a long night journey are equal to six hours at any other time. The risen sun awoke us, and we began to rub our eyes and reconnoitre our position. We had been sleeping by the side of a small tank; hard by were low-built houses and court-walls; on the other hand our castle, which now turned out to be the chief's, or rather the head farmer's abode, but spacious and lofty enough for a baron of the feudal times. We washed hands, faces, and feet (for our dress list, it is needless to say, did not include those Europeanized articles, stockings), and made straight for the K'hawah of this princely dwelling, sure to find morning coffee in function. The Nā'ib seated himself in due state near the master of the house, while we, entirely eclipsed by the grandeurs of a Persian ambassador on his way to Feyṣul, modestly took our places lower down. Many villagers came in to stare at the strangers, and to partake of coffee on their account. The meeting terminated by an invitation of all to breakfast in the garden



belonging to Mohanna, for the head man here was also country bailiff to the Bereyдах governor.

A very pretty garden it was—fig-trees and orange-trees, pomegranates and peaches, with stone-rimmed watercourses and tanks, and walks among the shubbery arranged with more taste and symmetry than Arabs usually display in their horticultural efforts. Carpets were spread under an overshadowing group of palms, and while the more solid repast was preparing, melons of all shapes and sizes were piled up before us for a whet. The Nā'ib produced a tea-urn with its complete appurtenances, not other than might have beseeemed an English drawing-room, besides a beautiful Persian pipe or Nargheelah, silver-mounted and elegantly adorned. Its owner had now recovered his good-humour, and his satellites with him. By nature they were downright bears ; but just now the prospect of a good breakfast had an admirable effect on their minds, and they were agreeable to the best of their abilities. Aboo-'Eysa was far too accustomed to such characters, and to the varying incidents of travelling, to be easily elated or depressed, and kept an even good-nature in his face and air, though he sometimes in private permitted himself very sarcastic remarks on the bad breeding of the Persians.

But he had a side intrigue to carry on, which occasioned many and long conversations between him and the Nā'ib, and effectually obviated any serious chance of their falling out. Aboo-Boṭeyn, Feysul's ci-devant pilgrim-agent, had been on indifferent terms with Aboo-'Eysa, and had even done him positive injury. His elopement to 'Oneyzah now left his office vacant ; it was a lucrative one, and exactly suited to our friend's ways, and to his long-standing familiarity with the Shiya'ees. They too had experienced his toleration and honest conduct, and held him in high esteem. The Nā'ib for his part hoped to obtain at Ri'aḍ full satisfaction for the past, and a guarantee of better things for the future. But he was an utter stranger at the Wahnābee court. A pact was therefore made between him and Aboo-'Eysa ; the latter was to give him the entrées, to facilitate his access to Feysul (no easy matter), and to dispose the ministers and every one else in his favour ; while the Nā'ib was to exact of the Wahnābee autocrat, as a *sine quâ non* condition of good understanding hereafter, that Aboo-



'Eysa should henceforth be sole conductor and plenipotentiary guide of the Persian pilgrims through Nejed. Such was the plan, long discussed, and at last fully agreed on, and all necessary steps in furtherance of its execution were accurately calculated and determined. We shall see the result before leaving *Ri'ad*.

The forenoon was far advanced before the sheep, the victim of our banquet, had been killed, skinned, boiled, and served up with rice, eggs, and other delicacies of the season. A hearty meal followed, and after a short interval of repose we got our baggage ready, thanked our host, and set out towards the north-east.

Our road yet lay in *Ḳaseem*, whose highlands we rejoined once more, and traversed till sunset. The view was very beautiful from its extent and variety of ups and downs, in broad grassy hills; little groups of trees stood in scattered detachments around; and had a river, that desideratum of Arabia, been in sight, one might almost have fancied oneself in the country bordering the Lower Rhine for some part of its course; readers may suppose, too, that there was less verdure here than in the European parallel; my comparison bears only on the general turn of the view. No river exists nearer *Ḳaseem* than *Shatt*, some hundred leagues off; and our eyes had been too long accustomed to the deceptive pools of the mirage, to associate with them even a passing idea of aught save drought and heat.

We journeyed on till dark, and then reached certain hillocks of a different character from the hard ground lately under our feet. Here began the *Nefood*, whose course from south-west to north-east, and then north, parts between *Ḳaseem*, *Woshem*, and *Sedeyr*. I have already said something of these sandy inlets when describing that which we crossed three months ago between *Djowf* and *Shomer*. The *Nefood* actually before us was fortunately narrower than our old acquaintance, but in other respects like it or worse. However, October is not July, even in Arabia, and we had this time a better guide in our company than the *Bedouin Djedey'*.

On the verge of the desert strip we now halted a little, to eat a hasty supper, and to drink, the Arabs coffee and the Persians tea. But journeying in these sands, under the heat of the day,

is alike killing to man and beast, and therefore Aboo-'Eysa had resolved that we should cross the greater portion under favour of the cooler hours of night. In pursuance of his idea, we were again mounted and on our way before the slanting pyramid of zodiacal light had faded in the west.

All night, a weary night, we waded up and down through waves of sand, in which the camels often sank up to their knees, and their riders were obliged to alight and help them on. There was no symptom of a track, no landmark to direct our way; the stars alone were now our compass and guide; but Aboo-'Eysa had passed this Nefood more than once, and knew the line of march by heart. When the first pale streak of dawn appeared on our right shoulder, we were near the summit of a sandy mountain, and the air blew keener than I had yet felt it in Arabia. We halted, and gathered together heaps of Ghada and other desert shrubs to light blazing fires, by which some sat, some lay and slept, myself for one, till the rising sunbeams tipped the yellow crests around, and we resumed our way.

Now by full daylight appeared the true character of the region which we were traversing; its aspect resembled the Nefood north of Djebel Shomer, but the undulations were here higher and deeper, and the sand itself lighter and less stable. In most spots neither shrub nor blade of grass could fix its root, in others a scanty vegetation struggled through, but no trace of man anywhere. The camels ploughed slowly on; the Persians, unaccustomed to such scenes, were downcast and silent; all were tired, and no wonder. At last, a little before noon, and just as the sun's heat was becoming intolerable, we reached the verge of an immense crater-like hollow, certainly three or four miles in circumference, where the sand-billows receded on every side, and left in the midst a pit seven or eight hundred feet in depth, at whose base we could discern a white gleam of limestone rock, and a small group of houses, trees, and gardens, thus capriciously isolated in the very heart of the desert.

This was the little village and oasis of Wāsīt, or "the intermediary," so called because a central point between the three provinces of Kaseem, Sedeyr, and Woshem, yet belonging to none of them. Nor is it often visited by wayfarers, as we

learnt from the inhabitants, men simple and half savage, from their little intercourse with the outer world, and unacquainted even with the common forms of Islamitic prayer, though dwelling in the midst of the Wāhhābee dominions. They enquired from us about the current news of 'Oneyzah and other events of the day, much after the fashion that a Lincolnshire peasant might ask for the news of the Mexican war or the Cochín-China expedition—things far distant, and only known by indistinct report. Aboo-'Eysa said that in his wanderings he had met with other like islets of vegetation and human life, but even more cut off from social intercourse, world-forgetting, and world-forgotten. Lastly, there exist also oases totally untenanted save by birds and gazelles, especially in the southern waste.

A long winding descent brought us to the bottom of the valley, where on our arrival men and boys came out to stare at the Persians, and by exacting double prices for fruit and camel's milk, proved themselves not altogether such fools as they looked. For us, regarded as Arabs, we enjoyed their hospitality—it was necessarily a limited one—gratis; whereupon the Nā'ib grew jealous, and declaimed against the Arabs as “infidels,” for not treating with suitable generosity pilgrims like themselves returning from the “house of God.”

To get out of this pit was no easy matter; *facilis descensus*, &c., thought I; no ascending path showed itself in the required direction, and every one tried to push up his floundering beast where the sand appeared at a manageable slope, and firm to the footing. Camels and men fell and rolled back down the declivity, till some of the party shed tears of vexation, and others, more successful, laughed at the annoyance of their companions. Aboo-'Eysa ran about from one to the other, attempting to direct and keep them together, till finally, as Heaven willed, we reached the upper rim to the north.

Before us lay what seemed a storm-driven sea of fire in the red light of afternoon, and through it we wound our way, till about an hour before sunset we fell in with a sort of track or furrow. Next opened out on our road a long long descent, at whose extreme base we discerned the important and commercial town of Zulphah. Beyond it rose the wall-like steep of Djebel Tōweyk, so often heard of, and now seen close at



hand. Needless to say how joyfully we welcomed the first view of that strange ridge, the heart and central knot of Arabia, beyond which whatever lay might almost be reckoned as a return journey.

We had now, in fact, crossed the Nefood, and had at our feet the great valley which constitutes the main line of communication between Nejēd and the north, reaching even to the Tigris and Bagdad. The sun was setting when we reached the lowest ebb of the sand ocean, and left its enormous waves piled up ridge above ridge behind us; Barakāt and myself, thanks to the excellent fibre of our dromedaries, were far in front of our associates, and we willingly allowed the beasts to turn aside from the track and feed on the copious pasturage of *Themām*, a ragged sweet-smelling grass common throughout Nejēd, and often mentioned by the poets, while we gazed now on the red range in our rear, now on the long valley stretching upon our right and left, to north and south, with the broken outlines of the walls of Zulphah a mile or more in front, and now on the precipitous though low fortress-ledge of *Toweyk* which bordered the horizon.

Night was fast coming on when we entered the scattered plantations of Zulphah. We traversed them awhile, amid enquiries from peasants returning home after their day's labour, and barking dogs who objected to our intrusion on their precincts at so late an hour. In the town itself we were at once surprised by meeting a much larger proportion of women than of men. This was occasioned by the absence of a great part of the male population in the war of 'Oneyzah.

We picked out our way to the palace of the governor, a Nejdean by birth, and said to have collected large riches while here in office. For the town is not only warlike but wealthy; it is the meeting-point and depôt of the north-bound commerce from *Sedeyr*, 'Aareḍ, *Woshem*, and whatever adjoins them; and its inhabitants are themselves no inconsiderable merchants and very bold travellers, often to be seen at *Zobeyr*, *Koweyt*, and *Başrah*. Their town is moreover the key of Nejēd on this side, and an important military position, barring the entrance of the valley where it stands, and which communicates directly with *Wadi Ḥaneefah*, by which it leads to the capital itself.



Arrived at the palace gate we were duly announced to the governor, but his highness was not in the hospitable vein that evening, and would not even allow us the shelter of the courtyard, so we encamped in the open air at the foot of his outer wall near the gateway. A band of Şolibahs had pitched their tents a little lower down; they had just come from a hunting expedition somewhere to the north to sell their game in Zulphah.

Meanwhile the town governor half repented him of his discourtesy, and generously resolved to give us board, though not lodging. In pursuance of this better thought he sent some of his attendants to the Şolibahs, and purchased from them a fine deer; this was handed over to the Nā'ib's servants, who set about dressing it for supper. The Şolibahs affirmed that it belonged to a peculiar species that never drinks water, and whose flesh is supposed to have a super-excellent flavour; and certainly the specimen before us was excellent eating, besides being served up with an extraordinary allowance of that best of sauces, hunger.

Next morning the Nā'ib was too tired to set out early, and we all waited where we were for an hour or more after sunrise. Barakāt and myself strolled about among the Şolibah tents, where the full forms and comparatively fair complexions of their tenants, their large eyes very unlike the narrow peepers of most Bedouins, and a peculiar cast of features, helped to confirm me in the belief of what report asserts touching the northerly origin of these wanderers, probably Syrian. The women were unveiled, and quite as forward as the men, or forwarder. A very pretty girl of the tribe played off this morning a trick too characteristic for omission. Its victim was the old Nā'ib, who was now up and taking his draught of early tea. The young lady, accompanied by two of her relatives, contrived to come and go backwards and forwards before the Persian group, till her glances had fairly wounded Moḥammed-'Alee's heart. He engaged her in a long and endearing conversation, and ended by a proposal of marriage. The family with well-affected joy gave a seeming assent, and accordingly when at last we climbed our dromedaries to pursue our journey, behold the dark-eyed gipsy-featured nymph with an elderly Şolibah relation, perhaps her father, both mounted on scraggy camels, alongside of

the Nā'ib, who with looks of unutterable tenderness was making the handsomest offers to his future bride. These she received with becoming bashfulness, and for half an hour of the way bantered her enamoured Strephon to her heart's content; till on our making a brief halt for breakfast at the verge of the town-gardens, she pretended to recollect I know not what valuable left behind at the Şolibah camp, and went back with her kinsman to fetch it, after giving a woman's promise of a speedy return. The deluded swain tarried in hope, and made us all tarry in impatience for nearly two hours; but neither bride nor bridesman reappeared, and the Nā'ib had to console himself with the thought of the half-dozen spouses (I had it from himself) who awaited him on his return home to Meshid 'Alee, as he slowly and sadly remounted his dromedary, and added another chapter to the long collection of anecdotes which, like most bad men, he loved to recount about the deceitfulness of the fair sex.

We had now passed the whole length of the town, several streets of which had been lately swept away by the winter torrents that pour at times their short-lived fury down this valley. Before us to the south-east stretched the long hollow; on our right was the Nefood, on our left Djebel Toweẏk and the province of Sedeẏr. The mountain air blew cool, and this day's journey was a far pleasanter one than its predecessor. We continued our march down the valley till the afternoon, when we saw in front a remarkable promontory or "Khosheym," literally, "a little nose," the generic name here for all jutting crags, starting out abruptly from the mountain level into the gully beneath, which here divides. We followed neither branch, but turned aside into a narrow gorge running up at a sharp angle to the north-east, and thus entered between the heights of Djebel Toweẏk itself.

This mountain essentially constitutes Nejed. It is a wide and flat chain, or rather plateau, whose general form is that of a huge crescent. If I may be permitted here to give my rough guess regarding the elevation of the main plateau, a guess grounded partly on the vegetation, climate, and similar local features, partly on an approximate estimate of the ascent itself, and of the subsequent descent on the other or sea side, I should say that it varies from a height of one to two thousand feet

above the surrounding level of the Peninsula, and may thus be about three thousand feet at most above the sea. Its loftiest ledges occur in the Sedeyr district, where we shall pass them before long; the centre and the south-westerly arm is certainly lower. Djebel Toweyk is the middle knot of Arabia, its Caucasus, so to say; and is still, as it has often been in former times, the turning point of the whole, or almost the whole, Peninsula in a political and national bearing. To it alone is the term "Nejed," strictly and topographically applied; although the same denomination is sometimes, nay, often, given by the Arabs themselves to all the inland provinces now under Wahhābee rule; and hence Yemāmah, Hareek, Aflāj, Dowāsir, and Qaseem have acquired the name of "Nejed," but more in a governmental than in a geographical sense.

As for the name "Toweyk," it is a diminutive form of the word "Towk," or "garland," "twist," and thus signifies "the little garland," or "little twist." It is for the most of calcareous formation, though toward east and south peaks of granite are sometimes intermixed with the limestone rock, or clustered apart. The extreme verge is almost always abrupt, and takes a bold rise of about five or six hundred feet sheer in chalky cliffs from the adjoining plain. Then succeeds a table-land, various in extent, and nearly level throughout; then another step of three or four hundred feet, followed by a second and higher table-land; and occasionally a third and yet loftier plateau crowns the second; but the summit is invariably flat, excepting the few granite crests on the further side of Sedeyr and towards Yemāmah. These high grounds are for the most clothed on their upper surface with fine and sufficient pasture, which lasts throughout the year; but the greater the elevation the less is the fertility and the drier the soil. Trees, solitary or in little groups, are here common; not indeed the well-known Ithel of the plain, but the Sidr (or, according to the Nejdean dialect, Sedeyr, whence the name of one great province), or the Markh, with its wide-spreading oak-like branches, and the tangled thorny Talh. Little water is to be found, at any rate in autumn, though I saw some spots that appeared to have pools in spring; we met with one perennial source, and one only.

The entire plateau is intersected by a maze of valleys, some broad, some narrow, some long and winding, some of little



length, but almost all bordered with steep and at times precipitous banks, and looking as though they had been artificially cut out in the limestone mountain. In these countless hollows is concentrated the fertility and the population of Nejed; gardens and houses, cultivation and villages, hidden from view among the depths while one journeys over the dry flats (I had well-nigh called them "denes," for they often reminded me of those near Great Yarmouth) above, till one comes suddenly on the mass of emerald green beneath. One would think that two different lands and climates had been somehow interwoven into one, yet remained unblended. The soil of these valleys is light, and mixed with marl, sand, and little pebbles washed down from the heights, for everywhere their abrupt edges are furrowed by torrent tracks, that collecting above rush over in winter, and often turn the greater part of the gully below into a violent watercourse for two or three days, till the momentary supply is spent, and then pools and splashes remain through the months of spring, while the most of the water sinks underground, where it forms an unfailing supply for the wells in summer, or breaks out once more in living springs amid the low lands of Ḥaṣa and Ḳaṭeef, towards the sea-coast, and beyond the outskirts of Djebel Ṭoweyḵ itself. However, none of these winter torrents find their way unbroken to the sea; some are at once reabsorbed, while yet within the limits of the mountain labyrinth, whose watershed, I should add, lies on the eastern, not on the western side; while a few, so the natives of the country told me, make their way right through Ṭoweyḵ to the Nefood on the west, or to the Dahnā on the east and south, and are there speedily lost in the deep sands, where a Rhine or a Euphrates could hardly avoid a similar fate.

However, though above-ground waters are rare and temporary, the underground provision is constant and copious, and hence the great fertility of these valleys. Nor is the water hard to get at, for the depth of the wells throughout Nejed seldom exceeds twelve or fifteen feet from the upper rim to the water, and often less, especially towards the southern half of 'Aared and Yemāmah. I had forgotten to say, in my topographical description of Ḳaseem, that the water of that province has very generally a saltish taste, just enough to be perceptible, but not disagreeable, at least to those accustomed to drink from our



own Norfolk "swipes." But here in Nejed water is hardly ever brackish, but presents instead sensible traces of iron. These phenomena find a ready explanation in the conditions of the respective soils themselves. Rocksalt of the purest quality is common in Kaseem, we have seen it a cheap and abundant article of sale at Bereydah, and throughout the province the earth has a saline flavour when placed on the tongue. On the other hand, in Nejed, and particularly towards the eastern shelves of the plateau, iron ore occurs in quantities sufficient to attract even Arab notice, and near Soley' I saw a whole range of decidedly ferrugineous hills, and was told of more. Hence, the chalybeate acquirements of the water when it filters through its underground passages.

The climate of the northern part of Djebel Toweik, whether plateau or valley, coincident with the province of Sedeir, is perhaps one of the healthiest in the world; an exception might be made in favour of Djebel Shomer alone. The above-named districts resemble each other closely in dryness of atmosphere, and the inhabitants of Sedeir, like those of Shomer, are remarkable for their ruddy complexion and well developed stature. But when we approach the centre of the mountain crescent, where its whole level lowers, while the more southerly latitude brings it nearer to the prevailing influences of the tropical zone, the air becomes damper and more relaxing, and a less salubrious climate pictures itself in the sallower faces and slender make of its denizens.

I had said that just before the bifurcation of the valley, our conductor led us aside by a sharp turn to the north-east, where we entered a gorge of Djebel Toweik, and found ourselves thus within the limits of the province of Sedeir. We had not long followed the narrow pass, when trees and verdure clustering up against its left side, indicated our approach to human habitation. Here nestled the village of Ghāt, a name common to many localities in Central Arabia, and sometimes varied into Ghoweit, Ghoutah, Ghoweitah, and so forth; all words implying "a hollow," with an idea of fertility annexed; just the same topographical peculiarity which obtains sometimes in our own country the familiar denomination of "punch-bowl." It was now that latter part of the afternoon which Arabs call 'Aṣr, when we entered the welcome shade, and made straight for the chief's

house. Like the rest of the village it was situated on the margin of the valley, close under the white cliff, and so placed the better to escape the injuries of torrents pouring down the mid hollow in the rainy season. The traces of water were indeed too evident throughout the valley, and some houses built too low down had been already ruined. The wells were so copiously supplied, even at this the very driest season of the year, that their overflow sufficed to fill a large reservoir from which ran on all sides rivulets which might almost have been taken for natural, overshadowed by the fig-tree, the pomegranate, and the palm. The houses, like the gardens, were prettily placed in shelving rows one above the other against the mountain rise. Before the chief's own residence was an open space, and close by a true Wahnābee mosque, large and unadorned, a mere meeting-house, unprofaned by the post-Mahomet inventions of minarets and carpets. Here we were in Nejed; and if I did not exactly sympathise with the feelings of Touchstone on his arrival in Arden, I could not but feel that his remarks then and there had a certain truth; "but travellers must be content."

However, the inhabitants of Nejed at large, and especially those of Sedeyr, have one good quality, very consolatory for those who leave home to visit their land—I mean hospitality to their guests. For this they are famed in Arabia and out of Arabia, in prose and verse, and they really deserve their reputation. The chief of Ghāt was a native of the province, young, cheerful, and exquisitely polite. We were all invited in, our camels were looked after, and we ourselves soon seated in the large and lofty K'hāwah, where chequered sunbeams aslant through the trellised windows illuminated the handsome group seated in the upper and more honourable part of the hall. There, by the host and his family, all in clean shirts and black cloaks, with new coloured head-dresses and silver-hilted swords, sat the Nā'ib making a very good figure in his Persian dress and large turban, while Abou-'Eysa, who, to keep him company, had exchanged the soiled garments of the road for better apparel, took his place close to the ambassador; the attendants of the Nā'ib ranged themselves on one side, and Barakāt and I on the other. Many were the "Y'ahla" and "Marḥaba's" ("welcome, honoured guests," &c.) and many too the Allah-

seasoned phrases indispensable in Wahnābee conversation. Of course no smoking was allowed ; even the Nā'ib could not venture on his Nargheelah. Aboo-'Eysa had taken a farewell whiff at his "cutty-pipe," before entering the village, and had advised me to do the same, remarking that "these dogs will hold us for infidels if we do it in their presence," and now looked as innocent of tobacco as an English damsel. Coffee was however plentiful, and very good. The conversation here and henceforth up to *Ri'aḍ*, whether in towns or villages, among high or low, ran mainly on two inexhaustible topics : the one, the excellencies and virtues of Feysul, with his certain triumph over the infidels of 'Oneyzah ; the other the wickedness and depravity of Zāmil and his party, and their certain defeat and ruin. Then came "Allāhū yensor el-Muslimeen," "may God give the victory to the Muslims ;" "Allāhū yensor Feysul," "may God give the victory to Feysul ;" "W'elladee yusellimū Feysul," "by Him who protects Feysul ;" "Allāhū yesalliṭ el-Muslimeen 'alā'l 'keffār," "may God give over the infidels to the power of the Muslims ;" and so on, till we began to say with Aboo-'Eysa, "Kuffaroona b'il-Muslimeen," "they put us to our wits' end with their Muslims ;" and wished as heartily for their defeat as they did for that of their opponents. Of Feysul no one dared speak except in a subdued tone of reverence applicable to a demigod at the very moment of apotheosis ; of one whom to obey was the sure countersign of goodness, and to oppose, the most unpardonable impiety.

These men in their hearts hold Egypt, Persia, Bagdad, Damascus, and, to sum up, all the world withoutside of Nejed, to be little better than dens of thieves and lairs of heresy and infidelity. Yet scarcely will they have heard, in answer to the first customary demands of introduction, that their guest is from any one of the above-named places, than they will begin a eulogy of town, country, and people, as though they had been the objects of their lifelong admiration, and extol the learning, piety, and good fame of those whom they most disagree with, and against whom they are ready to draw the sword of Islam at a moment's notice ; and this they will do in so perfectly quiet, easy, and natural a way, that it is difficult not to believe their words the faithful echo of their innermost thoughts ; nor need their guest, if gifted with ordinary prudence, fear any hint of disapproval



touching his own personal ways and deeds. "Eḏḏyf ma 'ākām melik," "the guest while in the house is its lord," is a trite saying with Nejdeans, and expresses to the life the deference with which they treat whoever has once been received under their roof. Nor when the stranger walks the streets will anyone stare at him, much less stop to gaze; nor will even the boys gather and laugh at him, nor will any whisper or aside remark be heard as he passes by. Perhaps foreigners do not come off so smoothly everywhere else. I ought to add that our own half-Syrian dress was hardly less outlandish and "furrener-looking" in Nejed than the long robe of a Lithuanian Jew or the furs of a Cossack in the streets of Norwich or Derby. The Persians appeared even more exotic. But Nejdean civility was above all such considerations. My readers must however recall to mind that Sedeyr surpasses in this respect the other provinces of Ṭoweyḵ. Besides, I speak only of what passes between hosts and guests reciprocally received and acknowledged for such; with casual strangers and unauthenticated foreigners much less courtesy is used, occasionally none.

The hospitality of Sedeyr is elegant and copious. After coffee and small talk in the Ḳ'hāwah, we mounted to the upper storey, where we found a large room with an open verandah prepared for our more express reception, and fruits, melons and peaches to wit, piled up in large dishes, to employ our leisure moments till supper should be ready. Here we were supposed to make ourselves perfectly at home, and might even light the "pipe of peace," the scandal of publicity not being considered to affect these apartments thus set apart exclusively for our use. Our host and his kinsmen came in and out, always ready for talk or service, and we began from their conversation to collect much valuable information about the actual state and government of Nejed proper.

Here Mohanna's men left us and returned home. No personal danger was to be apprehended on the road by travellers like ourselves "fi wejh Feyšul," "in the countenance of Feyšul," or "under" it, to make the Arab phrase English; and besides, we were sure of being henceforth accompanied from village to village, and from town to town, by the inhabitants of the country itself; not indeed for security, but for honour. I need hardly say that the honour was mainly intended for the Na'ib



and Aboo'Eysa; for us, throughout this stage of our itinerary, we attracted comparatively little attention, and this was indeed to be desired, though we had no lack of courteous and friendly treatment everywhere.

Next morning early, when we mounted each his camel or dromedary, we found the chief, with some youths of his kin, already on horseback to escort us on our way. We followed for about half an hour the ascending course of the gorge, under the shade of forest trees—the plane was one, somewhat to my surprise—intermingled with palms, between whose foliage white glimpses of the overhanging cliff glittered to the morning light, till we arrived at the “’Aḳabah,” or ascent.

Here we were at the *cul-de-sac*, or abrupt termination of the mountain cleft, and in front a narrow twisting path, like an uncoiled ribbon of white satin, reaching up several hundred feet to the table-land above, amid rocks and masses of lime and marl mingled with sandstone. A little water just oozing out at the base, like “Sibyl’s well,” showed the line taken by the stream after rain. Here ensued a contest of politeness, the chief insisting on accompanying us farther, and Aboo'Eysa (for the Persians remained like mutes) on his returning home. After many pretty speeches on either side, our quondam host wished us all in general, and then every one in particular, good speed, and went back, while a few of his relatives continued for our escort.

Soon we attained the great plateau, of which I have a few pages since given an anticipated description. And here for the first time since our passage of the Ghour, in the well-known desert between Gaza and Ma'ān, we met with a clouded sky and a disturbed atmosphere. But my readers will recall to mind that it was now the 7th of October, and not be surprised at an autumn storm. The sky, hitherto perfectly clear, was suddenly, indeed almost instantaneously, overcast, and a furious gust of wind rushed down, while clouds of dust darkened the air, till we could hardly see our way. Next followed a few drops of rain, but the wind was too high to allow of a good shower, and in about half an hour the whole had blown over; however, the breeze which succeeded was delightfully cool, and worthy of the Apennines.

About noon we halted in a brushwood covered plain, to light

fire and prepare coffee. After which we pursued our easterly way, still a little to the north, now and then meeting with travellers or peasants; but a European would find these roads very lonely in comparison with those of his own country. All the more did I admire the perfect submission and strict police enforced by the central government, so that even a casual robbery is very rare in the provinces, and highwaymen are totally out of the question. At last, near the same hour of afternoon that had brought us the day before to Ghât, we came in sight of Mejmaa', formerly capital of the province, and still a place of considerable importance, with a population, to judge by appearances and hearsay, of between ten and twelve thousand souls.

The governor, 'Abd-el-Maḥṣin es' Sedeyree, gave us a splendid reception. His palace, once centre of Sedeyr, is large and lofty, and he had prepared our lodgings in an upper storey, the balconies of which commanded a noble view of the mountain steppes north and east, with the gardens and groves below in green masses at our feet. Here we rested that evening, not unlike yesterday's, except in the superior quality of the entertainment. Moḥammed-'Alee wrote his journal by the gleam of a Persian lamp; he was in the habit of noting down minutely all incidents day by day, and had compiled a very amusing work for light reading, and enough, were it translated and published, to throw mine, I fear, into the shade. It was composed in Persian, but the Nā'ib sometimes favoured me with a recital, while he rendered it, for my ignorance, into bad Arabic or good Hindoostanee.

Here the Nā'ib's stock of tobacco began to run short, and he knew not whence to get a fresh supply, in a land where that plant is only known by the name of "el Mukzhee," or "the shameful," or by a still worse and wholly untranslatable denomination, which would imply it to be the immediate production of the Evil One, but after a fashion that the fiery dryness of his Satanic complexion might seem to render hardly credible. Nevertheless, such is the belief of the Wahnābees, who steadily assert that the first tobacco-sprouts arose from this very singular and diabolical irrigation, whence a name not to be mentioned to ears polite. Who then could dream, I do not say of employing, but of trafficking in, or even of possessing, so infamous an article? However, throughout the world, and by consequence

in Nejed too, no law but is violated, and no customs regulation but suffers from contraband. In this hope, founded on the weakness of human nature, Hoseyn, the servant of the Nā'ib, went a hunting, money in hand, amid the warehouses of Mejmaa', and excited immense disgust by his public enquiries after the "shameful;" but his first efforts met with no success. At last he applied to Aboo'Eysa, whose experience of the land had taught him facts and manœuvres beyond the attainment of a raw thick-witted Bagdadee. Our friend had often been in precisely the same predicament wherein the Nā'ib now lay, but knew much better where and how to distinguish between the real and the apparent, and under what veils private practice might contravene public observance. In fact, the number of smokers in Nejed is nowise small, and includes many a name of high birth and strict outside profession. Furnished with the requisite sum, Aboo'Eysa set out on a quieter but a more effectual search, and soon reappeared with a bag containing two good pounds avoirdupois of the Satanic leaf, which he handed over to the Nā'ib, after deducting a well-earned perquisite in kind, shared between him and ourselves.

We were up early next morning, for the night air was brisk, and a few hours of sleep had sufficed us. The whole level of the depression where Mejmaa' stands almost equals that of the surface of the first plateau, and to this now succeeded a second of yet greater height, forming part of the midrib of Toweẓk. We took the high ground as the shorter route, instead of keeping to the lower steppe, and went on with a wide landscape on either side, but not in front, where at some distance to the east a third and loftier ledge arose to shut out the distant view.

After sunrise we came on a phenomenon of a nature, I believe, without a second or a parallel in Central Arabia, yet withal most welcome, namely, a tolerably large source of running water, forming a wide and deepish stream, with grassy banks, and frogs croaking in the herbage. We opened our eyes in amazement; it was the first of the kind that we had beheld since leaving the valley of Djowf. But though a living, it is a short-lived rivulet, reaching only four or five hours' distance to Djelājil, where it is lost amid the plantations of the suburbs.

After passing between the towns of Djelājil and Rowdah,

names to be translated "bells" and "garden," at last we entered in between the heights of the uppermost plateau ; they rose here and there like huge flat-topped towers or wide platforms on either side, leaving, however, large openings betwixt, and pasture plains of great extent. While crossing one of these, we met a numerous band of the Meṭeyr Bedouins, once masters and tyrants of North-eastern Nejed, now, like their brother nomades, humble subjects of Wahnābee rule. They are comparatively rich in herds and flocks, and range over a wide extent of territory ; indeed we shall a few chapters later meet with a colony of them on the other side of the Persian Gulf. This was the only considerable body of Bedouins that we saw from Ḥā'yel to Ri'ad, nor did I witness any other throughout Nejed, Ḥaṣa, and 'Omān.

We had not long traversed the Meṭeyr encampment, when we came in view of the walls of Toweym, a large town, containing between twelve and fifteen thousand inhabitants, according to the computation here in use, and which I follow for want of better. It is less advantageously situated for irrigation than Mejmaa', and decidedly colder in climate, being high perched at the level, not of the first, but of the second plateau, and surrounded by irregular piles of the third and loftiest range, though at some little distance. The governor (I forget his name) showed himself by no means sociable. Aboo-'Eysa and myself rode for some time up and down the narrow streets of the town, looking for a subordinate to announce our arrival to his excellency, and finding none ; and when at last the message was delivered, hospitality was slow in forthcoming ; the palace door remained shut, and the governor was evidently loth to introduce us into the interior ; whether he feared our seeing its nakedness or its plenty I cannot tell. Ultimately he distributed us for lodging amid the dwellings of his attendants : the Nā'ib and his suite were in one of those subordinate K'hāwahs, ourselves in another, the Meccans in a third ; Aboo-'Eysa went and came between. Our vicarious host was a coarse, good-humoured man of arms, and treated us well. But the lane where his house stood was close and narrow, and the air oppressive ; so, after taking coffee and eating a few dates of the long-shaped yellow variety almost peculiar to Nejed, Barakāt and I sauntered out to see the town.



The houses are here built compactly, of two storeys in general, sometimes three; the lower rooms are often fifteen or sixteen feet high, and the upper ten or twelve; while the roof itself is frequently surrounded by a blind wall of six feet or more, till the whole attains a fair altitude, and is not altogether unimposing. Little or no attempt is, however, made at domestic ornament, and hardly any symmetry is observed between house and house except what mere chance circumstances may have determined. The streets are narrow and tortuous—mere lanes the most; and a committee for city ventilation would do no harm. I need not say that in this unrainy climate the roads are very seldom paved, nor indeed need to be, save in some limited instances.

The market-place of Toweym is unusually large, a very respectable square, and by an arrangement of rare occurrence situated close to the inner side of the town walls, not in the centre of the city. Here are several shops and warehouses, and a large mosque; but the want of minarets and cupolas deprives religious constructions in Nejed of the outward advantages of appearance they possess elsewhere; the Mesjid (literally, "prostration place") of Toweym resembled a large railway station more than anything else, but differed from such in having no refreshment room, unless, indeed, the side-building destined for cold-water ablution might merit that title. The town gates are strong for the country, guarded by day and shut by night; the walls in tolerably good repair, and surrounded with a deep outer trench, but no water.

As sunset approached, we went out of the town to look at the fields and groves; the soil hereabouts is good, but water is scarce; however, the dates are excellent. While we sat on a little hillock commanding the road, we had plenty of opportunity for conversation with the numerous passers-by, in and out of the town, for villages are thickly clustered on all sides; it is, by Arabian standard, a populous land. At nightfall we returned home to our supper, sent from the governor's palace; it was neither very good nor very bad; the bread was leavened, as we found it henceforth to the Persian Gulf—a great improvement on the unleavened cakes of Shomer and Kaseem, though in Kaseem too the passage of the Persian pilgrims tends to set up a new and better custom. Lastly, a quiet pipe on the

roof under the bright stars, and then to rest, but in-doors, for it was too cold for open air sleeping. It is a great blessing in Arabia that neither gnats nor mosquitoes, nor a certain saltatory insect very common in Southern Europe and in Syria ("letters four do form its name") are here known. The absence also of flies, great and small, horse and house, is astonishing; I know of no other country in the world so totally devoid of that most familiar and often importunate little creature. Would one could say the same of another familiar beast, which signifies love, at least in Welsh heraldry! Snakes in Nejed are no less rare than in Ireland or Malta. In an elegant romance published by M. Lamartine under the title of the "Journal of Fath-Allah Sey'yir," companion of the ill-fated Lascaris, a work already alluded to, these reptiles are spoken of as very common in Central Arabia; nay, appalling to think of, M. Lamartine's hero discovers a whole thicket full of their sloughs, of all colours and sizes—a sort of serpent's cloak-room, I suppose. Happy the travellers who possess so rich and so inventive an imagination! a few boa-constrictors make no bad variety, at least in a narrative. But I was not favoured with any such visions, "*nol vidi, nè credo che sia.*"

Early next day we took leave of our unsociable host, who, however, did us the honour of stepping down to his palace gate and seeing us off in person. At a short distance from Toweym we passed another large village with battlemented walls, and on the opposite side of the road a square castle, looking very mediæval; this was Hafr. A couple of hours farther on we reached Thomeyr, a straggling townlet, more abounding in broken walls than houses; close by was a tall white rock crowned by the picturesque remains of an old outwork or fort, overlooking the place. Here our party halted for breakfast in the shadow of the ruins. Barakāt and myself determined to try our fortune in the village itself; no guards appeared at its open gate, we entered unchallenged, and roamed through silent lanes and heaps of rubbish, vainly seeking news of milk and dates in this city of the dead. At last we met a meagre townsman, in look and apparel the apothecary of Romeo; and of him, not without misgivings of heart, we enquired where aught eatable could be had for love or money. He apologized, though there was scarce need of that, for not having any such article

at his disposal; "but," added he, "in such and such a house there will certainly be something good," and thitherwards he preceded us in our search. We found indeed a large dwelling, but the door was shut; we knocked to no purpose; nobody at home. Our man now set us a bolder example, and we all together scrambled through a breach in the mud wall, and found ourselves amid empty rooms and a desolate courtyard. "Everybody is out in the fields, women only excepted," said our guide, and we separated no better off than before. Despairing of the village commissariat, we climbed a turret on the outer walls, and looked round. Now we saw at some distance a beautiful palm-grove, where we concluded that dates could not be wanting, and off we set for it across the stubble-fields. But on arriving we found our paradise surrounded by high walls, and no gate discoverable. While thus we stood without, like Milton's fiend at Eden, but unable, like him, "by one high bound to overleap all bound," up came a handsome Şolibah lad, all in rags, half walking, half dancing, in the devil-may-care way of his tribe. "Can you tell us which is the way in?" was our first question, pointing to the garden before us; and, "Shall I sing you a song?" was his first answer. "We don't want your songs, but dates: how are we to get at them?" we replied. "Or shall I perform you a dance?" answered the grinning young scoundrel, and forthwith began an Arabian polka-step, laughing all the while at our undisguised impatience. At last he condescended to show us the way, but no other than what befitted an orchard-robbing boy, like himself, for it lay a little farther off, right over the wall, which he scaled with practised ingenuity, and helped us to follow. So we did, though perhaps with honester intentions, and, once within, stood amid trees, shade, and water. The "tender juvenile" then set up a shout, and soon a man appeared, "old Adam's likeness set to dress this garden," save that he was not old but young, as Adam might himself have been while yet in Eden. We were somewhat afraid of a surly reception, too well merited by our very equivocal introduction; but the gardener was better tempered than many of his caste, and after saluting us very politely, offered his services at our disposal. On learning that we were from Damascus, he grew positively friendly, led us through an umbrageous alley to a little lodge or watch-hut in the enclosure, and there presented us to a cousin of his, who



also said he had been to "Shām," or Damascus. But "Shām" has in Nejed as loose an application as Nejed has in Shām, and we found ere long that our new acquaintance had never really overpassed the limits of Arabia; he had only gone some way on the northern pilgrim road towards Tabook and its neighbourhood; however, this was enough to make him a lion in his village, and he was a great authority about Damascus, though he had stopped short at a full fortnight's distance from its gates. We made friends, and a very tolerable extemporaneous breakfast of curds and dates, with clear cold water, such as our hearts desired, was set before us. The young Şolibah had gone fruit-hunting on his own account. We then proposed to purchase a stock of dates for our onward way, whereon the gardener conducted us to an outhouse where heaps of three or four kinds of this fruit, red and yellow, round or long, lay piled up, and bade us choose. At his recommendation we filled a large cloth which we had brought with us for the purpose with excellent ruddy dates, and gave in return a small piece of money, welcome here as elsewhere. We then took leave and returned, but this time through the garden gate, to the stubble-fields, and passing under the broken walls of the village, reached our companions, who had become anxious at our absence.

Leaving Thomeyr, we climbed the highest shelf of Central Ṭoweyḳ, and traversed its bare upper ledge or table-land; the view all around was splendid, and forced the admiration of the Nā'ib himself, though little disposed to praise anything in Nejed. Only to the east lofty mountain-lines limited the prospect; south, west, and north, plateau and plain lay below in a bird's-eye landscape of immense extent. This district comprises, to the best of my observation, the most elevated point of Inner Arabia, which I should place at about fifteen or twenty miles south-east of Thomeyr. The pass through which our road lay is called "Theneeyat-'Aṭālah," that is, "the barren," though often simply known by the autonomastic designation of "Eth-Theneeyah," or "*the pass*" *par excellence*, because the highest in the land. The easterly mountain is "Djebel 'Aṭālah" itself, berhymed in Arab song.

Our path, a very stony one, led for three or four hours along the ridge; nor was it till late in the afternoon that we began to descend a very steep and slippery track, amid marl and grey-stone intermixed, till step by step we reached the lower level,



the same on which we had travelled the day before. All were heartily tired; the camels after so prolonged a march laboured heavily in their tread, and the Nā'ib gave vent to his ill-temper by a furious quarrel with his men; the occasion was a pomegranate which he had eaten alone without offering them a share: *hinc iræ et lacrymæ*. I mention this for a sample of many similar squalls that ruffled the placidity of the Shiya'ee band. But it is only justice to say that Moḥammed-'Alee's better mood soon returned, and he was then heartily ashamed of his own past indecorum.

Amid such alternations within and without, we were in all cases obliged to push smartly on if we wished to reach in time Şadiḳ, our destined night's halt. And at last we caught a glimpse of it amid uneven ground, just after threading a pretty knot of small hills, where couching gazelles started up on our approach and ran away; but evening was now far advanced, nor did we come under the walls till dark. A clean sandy space, hard by a well, and sheltered around by lofty palm-trees, afforded us a halting place. Here all alighted, while Aboo-'Eysa alone entered the town to give its governor notice of our arrival. He very courteously invited us, great and small, to his residence, despite the lateness of the hour. But the Nā'ib, dead tired, refused to rise from his carpets where he had flung him down; the sand was soft, and the night air not over cold. Accordingly the governor sent us out where we were a supply of meat, curds, honey, melons, and bread, enough for a good supper, to which the Arabs added coffee and the Persians tea. Somewhere about midnight we made a hearty meal by the light of our fires, and bivouacked beside them.

Aboo-'Eysa knew, though he would not say, that next day's march was almost equal in length to the preceding one. In spite of all remonstrances from the jaded travellers, he put us by dawn in movement, and we left Şadiḳ without having seen the inside of its walls. We had not gone far on our way when the chief's own brother, in a handsome red dress, and accompanied by some swordsmen of his train, rode after us to beg us to retrace our steps and honour his abode by partaking therein of an early dinner. But want of leisure rendered this impossible; so we thanked him for his offer, and he returned, after smoking a furtive pipe with Barakāt and myself.

The road now wound between shrubs and bushes, where hares and partridges abounded; the Nā'ib had slung to his saddle a good double-barrelled English fowling-piece, brought from India; but though he talked much and big about his gun and his sporting achievements, we could nohow persuade him to make use of it on this or any other occasion, whence my readers will, I fear, draw the same inference that we did, namely, that he was no great shot. A hare now crossed our path, and gave rise to a fierce dispute between the Sonnees and Shiya'ees of our party, touching the lawfulness of eating hare's flesh. The Sonnees, at least those of the Ḥanbalee sect, to which all Nejdeans belong, whether Wahnābees or not, hold swine's flesh alone to be forbidden them; but the Shiya'ees have a prohibitory list of almost or quite as many articles as the Jews themselves, and among these puss is included. The controversy ran high, and nothing was wanting to bring it to a matter-of-fact issue except the essential article of a certain well-known receipt, "first catch your hare;" but the Nā'ib's backwardness in fulfilling that, left matters at the degree of theory only, much to Barakāt's regret and mine, a feeling wherein our Nejdean companions heartily sympathized.

Issuing from the Arcadian labyrinth of rock and shrubbery, we came before noon on an open plain, and had on our right hand the town of Ḥoolah, a large and busy locality; the size and outline of its towered walls reminded me of Conway Castle, but the construction differs, being here almost wholly of sun-dried bricks, with little stone, and that unhewn. This town, men say, is one of the most flourishing in Sedeyr; perhaps its comparative proximity to Shaḡra and the Woshem road contributes to its prosperity. The inhabitants are not only active traders but diligent agriculturists, and the country around is planted and tilled to a notable distance.

We left behind us many other villages and hamlets of less note, near and far, till after a few hours of very pretty road over the undulations of the plateau, now mounting, now descending its whitened ledges, we reached at sunset the town of Ḥoreymelah, where we were to pass the evening.

This town, the birthplace of the well-known Moḥammed-ebn-'Abd-el-Wahnāb, founder and name-giver of the sect now dominant throughout nearly half Arabia, forms the northerly

wicket-gate or key to the central stronghold of Nejed, guarded in like fashion by Shakra to the west, Kharfah to the south, and the defile of Wadi Soley' to the east; four localities that occupy the corresponding entrances to the famous valley once Wadi Moseylemah, now by name Wadi Haneefah, in whose deep labyrinth lies the capital, and the very heart of Nejed. Horeymelah is situated almost on the boundary line between 'Aared and Sedeyr, but belongs to the latter. It blocks up the funnel-like end of the gorge through which we had been travelling half the day, with just enough open space around for the customary plantation-halo of a Nejdean town; the outer fortifications are, as beseems the position, remarkably strong, and the population about ten thousand in number. What most surprised me on our first entrance here, was the view of a large castle, placed on a rising ground within the town itself, and announcing in its symmetrical construction a degree of architectural and defensive science unusual in these countries. My wonder was however lessened on learning that this fortress was the work of Ibraheem Bacha, erected during the Egyptian occupation of Nejed subsequent to the fall of Derey'eyah. Young though Ibraheem then was, his fertile mind had already conceived the system which in after years covered Syria and the north with monuments of his prodigious energy, and of his consummate skill in everywhere selecting for his strategic constructions precisely the points best at once for securing subjection and barring invasion. The castle of Horeymelah was the first of Ibraheem's strong posts that I saw in Nejed, but we met with more farther on; and I was told that other like works of his yet exist in Woshem and on the skirts of Kaseem, but my line of route did not permit me to visit them.

Betaḥ, a native of the town and a zealous Wahnabee, heart and soul devoted to the interests of the Sa'ood family, was governor here. He was of good parentage, and not deficient in the kind of education peculiar to his country and sect; he received us very courteously, and introduced us without delay into his spacious abode within the castle. But the evening was warm, almost close, and after a few minutes of ceremony in the K'hawah, we unanimously voted for the open air. Carpets were accordingly spread and cushions arranged on the

large flat roof above the second storey, and thither we mounted by a flight of stone steps, ill-lighted, and particularly fit to break the necks of those who should venture on them at night time. On one side of the roof a third storey rose higher still, and the parapet against which we reclined our weary backs overhung the central market-place of the town.

Our evening party lasted on far into the starry night; the Persian Nā'ib and his satellites retired to rest, while Aboo-'Eysa and ourselves remained to listen to the fire-eating discourses of Beṭāḥ, and lead him on from tale to tale. Like most Nejdeans, he added innate eloquence of diction to grammatical purity of language; and Barakāt was here, as often elsewhere during our journey, compelled to admit that neither at Zaḥleh nor at Damascus is the spoken dialect, even amongst the best educated and the most pretentious, worthy the name of Arabic if compared to the diction of Nejed.

Next morning we resumed our route, accompanied by Beṭāḥ's men, who were charged to escort us to the frontiers of the province. These were not distant, and long before noon we entered on a white and marly plain, an expansion of the gorge up which we had come, and saw before us the little town of Sedoos, the northern limit of 'Aareḍ, and scene of several skirmishes during the Egyptian war. We here left the lower grounds, with their broad but circuitous route, to follow a straight cut across the mountain, whose ledge we climbed (so steep that the camels had much ado to master it), and reached a tableland of considerable elevation, yet well provided with grass and trees. The horizon was still bounded on the east by Toweẓk itself; south and west it was comparatively open. Our day's march was long, and we pushed on briskly and silently, till in the late afternoon we halted under a pretty grove, lighted our fires, and partook of what food ordinary Arab travellers have leisure or means to prepare. When we moved off once more evening was at hand, but before sunset we attained the extreme southerly verge of the heights, and skirted them for half an hour on a narrow path, having the depths of Wadi Haneefah immediately below. Then came a long and difficult descent into the valley, where, at the precipice foot, an overhanging rock sheltered a large deep pool of clear water, of which we all gladly drank, for the day had been hot, and



since leaving Sedoos we had not met with either well or fountain.

Now we threaded the valley in a south-westerly direction. The first shades of nightfall were closing in, when we found ourselves among the vestiges of 'Eyānah. For half a league or more the ground was intersected by broken walls, and heaps once towers and palaces, amid headless palm-trees, ranges of ithel marking where gardens had been, dry wells, and cisterns choked with dust. Not a living soul appeared as we wound through lines of rubbish that indicated where streets had been, and passed the lone market-gate, yet standing, and open on emptiness. It is a curious fact that Ibraheem Basha, struck by the advantageous position of the town, and perhaps not unwilling to establish a permanent counterpoise to the influence of Ḍerey'eeyah by the revival of old animosities, endeavoured in his day to rebuild and repeople this locality, cleared out the old wells and sunk new ones, brought artisans and mechanicians to the work; but all in vain, and he was obliged to abandon the now waterless and hopeless site to abiding desolation.

Wadi Ḥaneefah is hereabouts a good league in breadth, and full of trees and brushwood, while its precipitous sides are caverned out into countless recesses for the wolf and hyæna; deer abound also, and we saw the latter, besides hearing the growl of the ruder animals. To avoid the windings of the main valley, we left it shortly after getting clear of 'Eyānah, and proceeded on a small cross-branch leading due south, not without some danger of losing our way in the darkness, till ultimately the whole caravan, Persians, Arabs, and the one European also, fairly tired out with floundering amid sands, rocks, thorns, and ithel, insisted on a halt. Aboo-'Eysa, the most indefatigable of guides, and scarcely inclined to make allowance in others for a weariness which he never appeared himself to feel, was compelled, though after much expostulation, to consent to our just request. We lighted fires, a practical hint to all our neighbours of claw and tooth not to approach too near, and lay down to sleep.

The relentless Aboo-'Eysa availed himself of a simulated mistake between the rising moon and the dawn of morning to rouse us from rest two or three hours before day. Once up, we consented to continue our march, and soon regained the Wadi Ḥaneefah close by the little village of Rowḍah. Here in the

first century of Islam was laid the scene of the great battle between Khālīd-ebn-Waleed, the "Sword of the Faith," and Moseylemah the false prophet of Nejed, and here the death of the latter ensured the triumph of Mahometanism throughout Arabia.

In the early grey of morning we passed close under the plantations of Rowḍaḥ down the valley, now dry and still, once overflowed with the best blood of Arabia, and through the narrow and high-walled pass which gives entrance to the great strongholds of the land. The sun rose and lighted up to our view wild precipices on either side, with a tangled mass of broken rock and brushwood below, while coveys of partridges started up at our feet, and deer scampered away by the gorges to right or left, or a cloud of dust announced the approach of peasant bands or horsemen going to and fro, and gardens or hamlets gleamed through side-openings or stood niched in the bulging passes of the Wadi itself, till before noon we arrived at the little hamlet of Malka, or "the junction."

Its name is derived from its position. Here the valley divides in form of a Y, sending off two branches—one southerly to Dērey'eeyah, the other south-east-by-east through the centre of the province, and communicating with the actual capital, Ri'ad. At the point of bipartition stands what would in India be called a bungalow, and in Syria a khān—namely, a sort of open house for the accommodation and rest of travellers; close by is a large well, and a garden, the property of the heir-apparent 'Abd-Allah. The broad foliage of fig-trees and citrons overhangs the road, and invites to repose. We rested the hours of noon, partly in the guest-house and partly in the garden, while the Nā'ib availed himself of the seasonable leisure to dye with fresh henna his beard and moustache, whose whitening undergrowth threatened to belie the artificial youth of their tips. He flattered himself with the prospect of a speedy audience from the Wāhhābee monarch, and was fain to muster all the advantages of personal appearance by way of a supplement to diplomatic importance. Delusive hopes! vain endeavours! but meanwhile let him blacken his grey hairs and give sixty the semblance of thirty-five; it certainly improves his looks.

Abou'Eysa had meditated bringing us on that very evening to Ri'ad. But eight good leagues remained from Malka to the

capital; and when the Nā'ib had terminated his cosmetic operations, the easterly-turning shadows left us no hope of attaining Ri'ad before nightfall. However, we resumed our march, and took the arm of the valley leading to Ḍerey'eeyah; but before reaching it we once more quitted the Wadi, and followed a shorter path by the highlands to the left. Our way was next crossed by a long range of towers, built by Ibraheem Basha as outposts for the defence of this important position. Within their line stood the lonely walls of a large square barrack; the towers were what we sometimes call Martello—short, large, and round. The level rays of the setting sun now streamed across the plain, and we came on the ruins of Ḍerey'eeyah, filling up the whole breadth of the valley beneath. The palace walls, of unbaked brick, like the rest, rose close under the left or northern edge, but unroofed and tenantless; a little lower down a wide extent of fragments showed where the immense mosque had been, and hard by, the market-place; a tower on an isolated height was, I suppose, the original dwelling-place of the Sa'ood family while yet mere local chieftains, before growing greatness transferred them to their imperial palace. The outer fortifications remained almost uninjured for much of their extent, with turrets and bastions reddening in the western light; in other places the Egyptian artillery or the process of years had levelled them with the earth; within the town many houses were yet standing, but uninhabited; and the lines of the streets from gate to gate were distinct as in a ground-plan. From the great size of the town (for it is full half a mile in length, and not much less in breadth), and from the close packing of the houses, I should estimate its capacity at above forty thousand indwellers. The gardens lie without, and still "living waved where man had ceased to live," in full beauty and luxuriance, a deep green ring around the grey ruins. For although the Nejdeans, holding it for an ill omen to rebuild and reinhabit a town so fatally overthrown, have transplanted the seat of government, and with it the bulk of city population, to Ri'ad, they have not deemed it equally necessary to abandon the rich plantations and well-watered fields belonging to the old capital; and thus a small colony of gardeners, in scattered huts and village dwellings close under the walls, protract the blighted existence of Ḍerey'eeyah.



While from our commanding elevation we gazed thoughtfully on this scene, so full of remembrances, the sun set, and darkness grew on. We naturally proposed a halt; but Aboo-'Eysa turned a deaf ear, and affirmed that a garden belonging to 'Abd-er-Raḥmān, already mentioned as grandson of the first Wahhābee, was but a little farther before us, and better adapted to our night's rest than the ruins. In truth, three hours of brisk travelling yet intervened between Dery'eeyah and the place in question; but our guide was unwilling to enter Dery'eeyah in company of Persians and Syrians, Shiya'ees and Christians; and this he afterwards confessed to me. For whether from one of those curious local influences which outlast even the change of races, and give one abiding colour to the successive tenants of the same spot, or whether it be occasioned by the constant view of their fallen greatness and the triumph of their enemies, the scanty population of Dery'eeyah comprises some of the bitterest and most bigoted fanatics that even 'Aareḍ can offer. Accordingly we moved on, still keeping to the heights, and late at night descended a little hollow, where amid an extensive garden stood the country villa of 'Abd-er-Raḥmān.

We did not attempt to enter the house; indeed, at such an hour no one was stirring to receive us. But a shed in the garden close by sufficed for travellers who were all too weary to desire aught but sleep; and this we soon found in spite of dogs and jackals, numerous here and throughout Nejed.

From this locality to the capital was about four miles' distance. Our party divided next morning: the Nā'ib and his associates remaining behind, while Barakāt and myself, with Aboo-'Eysa, set off straight for the town, where our guide was to give notice at the palace of the approach of the Persian dignitary, that the honours due to his reception might meet him half-way. At our request the Meccans stayed also in the rear; we did not desire the equivocal effect of their company on a first appearance.

For about an hour we proceeded southward, through barren and undulating ground, unable to see over the country to any distance. At last we attained a rising eminence, and crossing it, came at once in full view of Ri'ad, the main object of our long journey—the capital of Nejed and half Arabia, its very heart of hearts.



## CHAPTER VIII

## RĪ'AD

As when a scout  
Through dark and secret ways with peril gone  
All night, at last by break of cheerful dawn  
Obtains the brow of some high-climbing hill,  
Which to his eye discovers unawares  
The goodly prospect of some foreign land  
First seen, or some renowned metropolis.

Milton

*A View of RĪ'ad and its Neighbourhood—A Meeting—Cemetery—Entrance of the Town—Market-place—Halt at the Palace—'Abd-el-'Azeez, his Office and Character—Interior of the Palace—Its Architecture, Size, and Arrangements—The K̄hāwah—Dinner—The Reception of the Nā'ib—His Disgust—Our Lodgings in the Palace of Djeloo'wee—Effect of our Arrival on Feyṣul—His Retreat out of Town—RĪ'ad Spies—'Abd-el-Ḥameed the Peshawuree—His History, Character, and Conversation—'Abbood the Maddey'ye—Cholera in Nejed—Institution of the "Zelators"—Their System—Power—Its Results at RĪ'ad, in Nejed, and in the Provinces—Present Position of the Zelators—Reaction—'Abbood and his Conversation—Offer made by 'Abd-el-'Azeez—Our Refusal—Interview of Aboo-'Eysa with Feyṣul—Our Difficulties—Bribing the Government—Our New Dwelling near the Nā'ib—Coffee—Its Qualities and Trade—Our Life at RĪ'ad—A Visit to the Market-place—Mixed Populations—Sketches—Four Divisions of the Town—Great Square and Djāmia—Walls of the Town—Gardens—Climate—Sheep, Cattle, Game—The Negro Population, why numerous here—Negro Emancipation—The Khoḍyreeyah—Their Social Position—Population of Nejed—Benoo-Remeem—Their Peculiar Character—Decline of Commerce—Agriculture—Warlike Impulse—Reflections—Language of Nejed—The Two great Arab Dialects—Their Origin and Difference—Remarks.*

BEFORE us stretched a wild open valley, and in its foreground, immediately below the pebbly slope on whose summit we stood, lay the capital, large and square, crowned by high towers and strong walls of defence, a mass of roofs and ter-

racess, where overtopping all frowned the huge but irregular pile of Feysul's royal castle, and hard by it rose the scarce less conspicuous palace, built and inhabited by his eldest son, 'Abd-Allah. Other edifices too of remarkable appearance broke here and there through the maze of grey roof-tops, but their object and indwellers were yet to learn. All around for full three miles over the surrounding plain, but more especially to the west and south, waved a sea of palm-trees above green fields and well-watered gardens; while the singing droning sound of the water-wheels reached us even where we had halted, at a quarter of a mile or more from the nearest town-walls. On the opposite side southwards, the valley opened out into the great and even more fertile plains of Yemāmah, thickly dotted with groves and villages, among which the large town of Manfooḥah, hardly inferior in size to Ri'ad itself, might be clearly distinguished. Farther in the background ranged the blue hills, the ragged sierra of Yemāmah, compared some thirteen hundred years since, by 'Amroo-ebn-Kelthoom the Shomerite, to drawn swords in battle array; and behind them was concealed the immeasurable Desert of the South, or Dahnā. On the west the valley closes in and narrows in its upward windings towards Dery'eeyah, while to the south-west the low mounds of Aflāj are the division between it and Wadi Dowāsir. Due east in the distance a long blue line marks the farthest heights of Toweyḡ, and shuts out from view the low ground of Ḥaṣa and the shores of the Persian Gulf. In all the countries which I have visited, and they are many, seldom has it been mine to survey a landscape equal to this in beauty and in historical meaning, rich and full alike to eye and mind. But should any of my readers have ever approached Damascus from the side of the Anti-Lebanon, and surveyed the Ghooṭah from the heights above Mazzeh, they may thence form an approximate idea of the valley of Ri'ad when viewed from the north. Only this is wider and more varied, and the circle of vision here embraces vaster plains and bolder mountains; while the mixture of tropical aridity and luxuriant verdure, of crowded population and desert tracks, is one that Arabia alone can present, and in comparison with which Syria seems tame, and Italy monotonous.

A light morning mist, the first we had witnessed for many

days, hung over the town, and bespoke the copious moisture of its gardens. But the hot sun soon dissipated the thin and transient veil; whilst the sensible increase of heat indicated a region not only more southerly in latitude than that hitherto traversed, but also exposed to the burning winds of the neighbouring desert, that lies beyond the inner verge of Yemāmah, like one vast furnace, up to the very shores of the Indian Ocean.

Barakāt and myself stopped our dromedaries a few minutes on the height, to study and enjoy this noble prospect, and to forget the anxiety inseparable from a first approach to the lion's own den. Aboo'Eysa too, though not unacquainted with the scene, willingly paused with us to point out and name the main features of the view, and show us where lay the onward road to his home in Ḥaṣa. We then descended the slope and skirted the walls of the first outlying plantations which gird the town. Here more than one whom we met saluted our guide in the friendly tone of an old acquaintance; but above all, a lad whom Aboo'Eysa had picked up some years before; a destitute orphan of this vicinity, whose education and means of livelihood he had, with a generosity less remarkable in Arabia than it might be elsewhere, provided for, till the youth was able to work out for himself his own way in the world. He now happened to be filling a water-skin from a well near the roadside at the moment of our arrival. The boy ran up to kiss Aboo'Eysa's hand, and to prove, by the evident sincerity of his delight at seeing him again, that gratitude is no less an Arab than a European virtue, whatever the ignorance or the prejudices of some foreigners may have affirmed to the contrary. With a little knot of companions walking by our side, and laughing and talking their fill, we entered on a byway leading between the royal stables on one hand, and a spacious garden belonging to 'Abd-el-Lateef, Qaḍee of the town, on the other. After a while we came out on the great cemetery, which spreads along the north-eastern wall, and contains the population of many past years—low tombs, without stone or memorial, inscription or date. Among these lie Turkee, father of the present monarch, and close beside him his slaughtered rivals, Meshāree and Ebn-Theney'yān, with many others of note in their day, now undistinguished from the meanest and poorest of their fellow-countrymen.

This burial-ground is intersected by several tracks, leading to the different town-gates; we ourselves now followed a path ending at the north-eastern portal, a wide and high entrance, with thick square towers on either side; several guardsmen armed with swords were seated in the passage. Aboo-'Eysa answered their challenge, and led us within the town. Here we found ourselves at first in a broad street, going straight to the palace; on each side were large houses, generally two storeys high, wells for ablution, mosques of various dimensions, and a few fruit-trees planted here and there in the courtyards. After advancing two hundred yards or rather more, we had on our right hand the palace of 'Abd-Allah, a recent and almost symmetrical construction, square in form, with goodly carved gates, and three storeys of windows one above the other. We contemplated and were contemplated by groups of negroes and servants, seated near the doors, or on the benches outside, in the cool of the morning shade. A little farther on, to the left, we passed the palace of Djeloo'wee, brother of Feyşul, and at this time absent on business in the direction of Kela'at-Bisha'. At last we reached a great open square: its right side, the northern, consists of shops and warehouses; while the left is entirely absorbed by the huge abode of Nejdean royalty; in front of us, and consequently to the west, a long covered passage, upborne high on a clumsy colonnade, crossed the breadth of the square, and reached from the palace to the great mosque, which it thus joins directly with the interior of the castle, and affords old Feyşul a private and unseen passage at will from his own apartments to his official post at the Friday prayers, without exposing him on his way to vulgar curiosity, or perhaps to the dangers of treachery. For the fate of his father and of his great-uncle, his predecessors on the throne, and each of them pierced by the dagger of an assassin during public worship, has rendered Feyşul very timid on this score, though not at prayer-time only. Behind this colonnade, other shops and warehouses make up the end of the square, or more properly parallelogram; its total length is about two hundred paces, by rather more than half the same width. In the midst of this space, and under the far-reaching shadow of the castle walls, are seated some fifty or sixty women, each with a stock of bread, dates, milk, vegetables, or firewood before her for sale; around



are crowds of loiterers, camels, dromedaries, sacks piled up, and all the wonted accompaniments of an Arab market.

But we did not now stop to gaze, nor indeed did we pay much attention to all this; our first introduction to the monarch and the critical position before us took up all our thoughts. So we paced on alongside of the long blind wall running out from the central keep, and looking more like the outside of a fortress than of a peaceful residence, till we came near a low and narrow gate, the only entry to the palace. Deep sunk between the bastions, with massive folding-doors iron-bound, though thrown open at this hour of the day, and giving entrance into a dark passage, one might easily have taken it for the vestibule of a prison; while the number of guards, some black, some white, but all sword-girt, who almost choked the way, did not seem very inviting to those without, especially to foreigners. Long earth-seats lined the adjoining walls, and afforded a convenient waiting-place for visitors; and here we took up our rest at a little distance from the palace gate; but Aboo'Eysa entered at once to announce our arrival, and the approach of the Nā'ib.

The morning was not far advanced, it might be eight o'clock or little later. The passers-by were many, for the adjoining market was open, and every one coming and going on his daily business. However no one approached to question us, though several stared; we were somewhat surprised at this unwonted absence of familiarity, not yet fully knowing its cause. After a good half-hour's waiting the ice was broken.

The first who drew near and saluted us was a tall meagre figure, of a sallow complexion, and an intelligent but slightly ill-natured and underhand cast of features. He was very well dressed, though of course without a vestige of unlawful silk in his apparel, and a certain air of conscious importance tempered the affability of his politeness. This was 'Abd-el'Azeez, whom, for want of a better title, I shall call the minister of foreign affairs, such being the approximate translation of his official style, "'Wezeer-el-Khārijeeyah." His office extends to whatever does not immediately regard the internal administration, whether political, fiscal, or military. Thus it is his to regulate the reception of ambassadors from foreign courts, or the expedition of such from Ri'ad itself; to his department belongs the convey-

ance of government letters, messages, and all the detail of lesser affairs regarding allies or neighbours, especially where the Bedouin tribes of Nejed are concerned ; in his keeping are the muster-rolls of the towns and provinces ; and lastly, he exercises an executive superintendence over export and import duties—a profitable charge, particularly when in the hands of one not over-famed for strictness of conscience or contempt of gain. His personal qualities are those which distinguish the majority of old *Ri'ad* families, and are indeed common enough throughout 'Aared. A reserved and equable exterior, a smooth tongue, a courteous though grave manner, and beneath this, hatred, envy, rapacity, and licentiousness enough to make his intimacy dangerous, his enmity mortal, and his friendship suspected. This is the peculiar stamp of the 'Aared race, the pith and heart of the Wahnabee government ; we have already seen a sample of it in Mohanna at Bereydaḥ ; but here it is a province of Mohannas. In general the base-work and ground-colour of their character is envy and hatred ; rapacity and licentiousness, though seldom wholly wanting, are accessory embellishments ; pride is universal, vanity rare. Add to this, great courage, endurance, persistence of purpose, an inflexible will united to a most flexible cunning, passions that can bide their time, and audacity long postponed till the moment to strike once, and once only ; and it will be easily understood why the empire of these men is alike widely spread and widely hated, submitted to and loathed, now firm in quiet pressure, and now varied by broad blood-streaks and desolating terror.

Accompanied by some attendants from the palace, 'Abd-el-'Azeez came stately up, and seated himself by our side. He next began the customary interrogations of whence and what, with much smiling courtesy and show of welcome. After hearing our replies, the same of course as those given elsewhere, he invited us to enter the precincts, and partake of his Majesty's coffee and hospitality, while he promised us more immediate communications from the king himself in the course of the day. Accordingly we followed him within the gate, and passing its long and obscure continuation came into a sort of interior lane, or open corridor. On one side were the apartments occupied by the sovereign, his private audience-room, his oratory, so to call it, or special *Muṣalla*, "place of prayer," and

behind these the chambers of his numerous harem, and of his unmarried daughter, an old maid of fifty at least, who acts as her father's secretary in important correspondence, and with whom, for this very reason, Feysul has never been willing to part, in spite of her many and pressing suitors. This quarter of the palace is spacious and lofty, three storeys in height, and between fifty and sixty feet from the ground to the roof-parapet. In these very rooms Meshāree, the temporary usurper, was killed by 'Abd-Allah, the father of our old acquaintance Ṭelāl. In front of this mass of building, but on the inner side and on the right of the passage just mentioned, is a square unroofed court, surrounded with seats, and here Feysul sometimes gives a half-public audience. From this court a private door, well guarded and narrow like the first, leads to the apartments described, which form, so to speak, a separate palace within the palace. They own, however, a second point of communication with the rest of the building, by means of a covered way, thrown out from the second storey across the passage where we now stood; a third is given by the long gallery that leads above its columns to the mosque at about a hundred yards' distance; on all other sides whatever intercourse from without is carefully excluded. I ought here to add that all the windows are strongly cross-barred, and the doors solid and provided with stout locks and bolts, while on the outside a glacis encircles the lower part of the walls, and adds to their thickness, besides giving them the appearance of regular fortification. Lastly, the ground-storey has no windows, large or small, opening on the exterior.

On the other side of the passage the first door we meet with is that of the K'hāwah. To this apartment entrance is given by a vestibule wherein visitors deposit their shoes or swords, or both if they have both; the K'hāwah itself is sufficiently large, about forty feet in length and of nearly equal width, but low and ill-lighted. Farther on is another door, conducting to the prison. I visited two of its chambers or cells; they would hardly have attracted the censure even of a Howard—large, airy, and provided with whatever might be requisite for the comfort of their indwellers. The Habs-ed-Dem, literally "Prison of Blood," that is, that for state criminals of the first order, is underneath, below ground, and probably affords worse lodgings; but I did

not think it prudent to ask admittance. Just beyond this prison, and opposite to the courtyard on the other side already mentioned, a long flight of stairs leads up through the open air to the second storey; here is a guest's dining-room, capable of admitting forty at a time, and pleasantly cool. Immediately behind it is said to exist in the very thickness of the wall a small closet, communicating with the secret passage to the harem; and in this unworthy niche popular scandal ensconces Feyşul, who may thus himself unseen overhear through the thin partition whatever escapes his unsuspecting guests in a moment of convivial freedom, and record it for his own ends:—"rats behind the arras"! Beyond are rooms inhabited by servants and attendants.

Farther on the passage enters the main body of the palace, passing under the second storey, and at once branches off on either side. Right hand it leads to the great kitchen, next to the indoors Muşalla, or oratory for the inhabitants of the palace, Feyşul and his harem alone excepted; and beyond terminates in a second and spacious courtyard, on one side of which is the arsenal and powder-magazine, and on the other workshops of various descriptions, a watchmaker's among the rest, all for the king's immediate service. Hard by the kitchen are the rooms of 'Abd-el-Hameed, native of Balkh, a dubious character, supposed to be deeply engaged in religious study, and really busied in very different pursuits; but of him more anon. On this same side inhabits our friend 'Abd-el-'Azeez, the foreign minister; but I never entered his saloon, contenting myself with identifying the door and locality for information's sake.

The left branch passage leads to the large and handsome apartments tenanted by Maḥboob, prime minister of the empire. Exactly opposite lives the Meṭow'waa', or chaplain of the palace, and next door to him another learned Nejdean, both plunged in studies on antecedent reprobation, and the polytheism of all sects, their own excepted. Farther on are the extensive quarters of Djowhar, the state-treasurer (his name, which being interpreted means "Jewel," is at least appropriate), and opposite to these is a long suite of rooms where lives one Naşir, a sort of court chamberlain, but which are also at the disposal of Sa'ood, second son of Feyşul, when he visits his father at Ri'ad. Last, but not least, Aboo-Shems, head artilleryman of the army, in-



habits this same section of the palace. Besides these notables, a crowd of full sixty or seventy attendants, mostly negroes, are lodged within the precincts; while all and each, from the highest to the lowest, have their separate apartments for numerous wives; and, again, every single household is entirely distinct from the rest: hence my readers may imagine how vast and how ill-assorted this mass of building must be. Lastly, there exists on the left a long courtyard or area, corresponding to that already mentioned on the right; and here too is situated the Bab-es-Sirr, or secret gate, constructed to serve in the eventualities of a siege, of treason, or other desperate emergencies. The entire hive of habitations is surrounded by high walls and hollow round towers for defence; two-thirds of the circuit have the additional safeguard of a deep trench, but without water.

If my readers have seen, as most of them undoubtedly will, the Paris Tuileries, they may hereby know that the whole extent of Feysul's palace equals about two-thirds of that construction, and is little inferior to it in height; if indeed we except the angular pyramidal roofs or extinguishers peculiar to the French edifice. But in ornament the Parisian pile has the better of it, for there is small pretension to architectural embellishment in this Wahnabee Louvre. Without, within, every other consideration has been sacrificed to strength and security; and the outer view of Newgate, at any rate, bears a very strong resemblance to the general effect of Feysul's palace. However, this latter is at any rate well furnished and fitted up, especially in the sections allotted to the royal family themselves, to Maḥboob and to Djowhar; the upstairs rooms too are fairly lighted; not so the ground-storey, which would be all the better for gas, could it but be introduced here.

I should have said that the quarter set apart for royalty, that is, Feysul and his many queens, is itself a quadrangle with an inner court, but into this I was never permitted to enter; these are family apartments on which no prying eye may look. The divan for special receptions, the only room hereabouts into which a stranger can be introduced, is large and comfortable, being about fifty feet long, twenty or more in breadth, and high in proportion.

In the first court, and in that on the left where resides the valorous Abou-Shems, several rusty specimens of artillery

strike awe into Arab souls. I counted above twenty field-pieces, half-a-dozen of them still available for service; there were, I was told, others, which I did not see. At Hāṣa and Kaṭeef there exist about thirty more; so that Feysul's battery-list may sum up sixty or so of these warlike engines; a fourth of them in all, according to my personal inspection, are fit for use; and the rest "as good, for aught his kingship knows," but they are "honeycombed."

Such is the palace, as I afterwards came to know it in detail, and such its contents. For the present we stopped short at our visit to the K'hāwah. The head coffee-maker was a good-natured fellow, and, strange to say, not a negro, nor even a man of 'Aareḍ, but from the Hareek; several guests were seated around, and conversation followed, but every one was manifestly under restraint. The fact is, that in this town, and yet more of course in the palace, no one ambitious of sleeping in a whole skin can give his tongue free play; and all have in consequence the manner of boys when the school-master is at home. However, the coffee was excellent; in that point Ri'ad and its K'hāwahs are unrivalled, and we remained awhile in aromatic enjoyment, awaiting further orders from 'Abd-el-'Azeez, or some other of the court.

But the coincident arrival of the Nā'ib and his train was too serious a preoccupation to admit of much thought being yet given to us; and when noon came we were still sitting almost disregarded in the K'hāwah, while our baggage and camels waited patiently in the sun outside. At last a negro slave came up, and invited us in the king's name to dinner within the guest-room upstairs, and there accordingly we ate our rice and mutton with a garnish of dates, and on rising from table were reminded by our dusky Ganymede to pray God for a long reign to Feysul our host.

Aboo-'Eysa meanwhile, in company with the outriders sent from the palace, had gone to meet the Nā'ib and introduce him to the lodgings prepared for his reception. Very much was the Persian astounded to find none of the royal family among those who thus came, no one even of high name or office; but yet more was his surprise when, instead of immediate admittance to Feysul's presence and eager embrace, he was quietly led aside to the very guest-room whither we had

been conducted, and a dinner not a whit more sumptuous than ours was set before him, after which he was very coolly told that he might pray for Feysul and retire to his quarters, while the king settled the day and hour whereon he would vouchsafe him the honour of an audience.

I never saw any one so unutterably disgusted as our Persian on this occasion. In broken Arabic, and loud enough to be heard by half the palace, he vented his spleen against Arabs, Bedouins, Wahnābees, Nejed, town, country, and all. The men of 'Aareḍ, who heard and half understood, looked very grave, but were much too polite to say anything. Perhaps Feysul too was there, invisible in his recess, to overhear the conversation. Aboo-'Eysa well knew that antipathy was in this case mutual, and that if the Nā'ib thought the Wahnābees and their king mere barbarians, unworthy, in European phrase, to black his shoes, they, in their turn, looked on him as a despicable foreigner and an infidel, thus fairly equalizing the balance of reciprocal aversion. Hence he could not but feel the position to be very uncomfortable, and tried to console the indignant Shirazee with excuses and explanations of the "se non vero, ben trovato" kind. All this in our presence, for the Iranian band arrived just at the conclusion of our meal. I had much ado not to laugh at both parties, thinking "six of one and," &c., but tried my utmost to look grave, in consideration of the Nejdeans around, and took my cue from Aboo-'Eysa. Meanwhile we suggested to this latter, in an undertone, that for us too lodging for man and beast would be very desirable, and that if we had dined our dromedaries had not. Our guide was well acquainted with the ins and outs of the palace, and in less than no time had found out 'Abd-el-'Azeez, and arranged matters with him in our behalf. Nay, the minister of foreign affairs condescended to come in person, and, sweetly smiling, informed us that our temporary habitation was ready, and that Aboo-'Eysa would conduct us thither without delay. We then begged to know, if possible, the king's good will and pleasure regarding our stay and our business in the town. For on our first introduction we had duly stated, in the most correct Wahnābee phraseology, that we had come to Ri'aḍ "desiring the favour of God, and secondly of Feysul; and that we begged of God, and secondly of Feysul, permission to exercise in the

town our medical profession, under the protection of God, and in the next place of Feyṣul." For Dogberry's advice to "set God first, for God defend but God should go before such villains," is here observed to the letter; whatever is desired, purported, or asked, the Deity must take the lead. Nor this only, but even the subsequent mention of the creature must nowise be coupled with that of the Creator by the ordinary conjunction "w'," that is, "and," since that would imply equality between the two—flat blasphemy in word or thought. Hence the disjunctive "thumma," or "next after," "at a distance," must take the place of "w'," under penalty of prosecution under the statute. "Unlucky the man who visits Nejed without being previously well versed in the niceties of grammar," said Barakāt; "under these schoolmasters a mistake might cost the scholar his head." But of this more anon: to return to our subject, 'Abd-el-'Azeez, a true politician, answered our second interrogation with a vague assurance of good will and unmeaning patronage. Meantime the Nā'ib and his train marched off in high dudgeon to their quarters, and Aboo-'Eysa gave our dromedaries a kick, made them rise, and drove them before us to our new abode.

This was in a section of Djeloo'wee's palace, now vacant, as before stated, through the absence of the prince on a half-military, half-fiscal expedition. A spacious K'hāwah, with two adjoining rooms and an upstairs chamber, had been set apart for our use. We put up the dromedaries in the courtyard, and installed ourselves in the K'hāwah.

But it is time to "shift the scene, to represent" what measures were being taken behind the stage in the palace itself on our account, and what effect this morning's incidents had produced on Feyṣul and his court. We were not long in learning the particulars, equally ludicrous and characteristic of the land and of its rulers, and well calculated to assign the full measure of their weakness, no less than other circumstances had given us that of their strength. The facts were as follow:—

When Feyṣul received intelligence of this bevy of strangers at his door, the Persian "chargé d'affaires" with all his grievances, the Meccans with their impudent mendicity, and the Syrians with their medical pretensions, he fairly lost his balance of mind, and went next to mad. Old and blind, super-



stitious and timid, bigoted and tyrannical, whatever construction the utmost conjecture could put on this motley band thus rushing almost unannounced into his very capital, nay, encamped at the doors of his own palace, served only to augment his alarm, suspicion, and disgust. The sacred centre of Nejdean orthodoxy profaned in one and the same moment by the threefold abomination of Persians, Meccans, and Syrians, Shiya'ees, Sonnees, and Christians, heretics, polytheists, and infidels, was surely enough to call down fire from heaven, or awake an earthquake from beneath. An invasion of cholera was the very least that could be next anticipated. There was, however, worse yet : the begging Meccans might indeed be easily got rid of, and a scanty gift would, it was to be hoped, purchase the relief of the capital from the pollution of their presence. But the Nā'ib, with Teheran and the Shah of Persia at his back, was a very different affair ; and Feysul knew too well that the complaints now about to be laid before him were over-true, and that for all vexations inflicted by Aboo-Boṭeyn or Mohanna, he himself, their master, was really and ultimately responsible. Besides, it was precisely by the Persian dagger of a Persian assassin that his ancestor 'Abd-el-'Azeez-ebn-Sa'ood had fallen ; and who could tell whether the Nā'ib, or at any rate one of his attendants, might not have a similar weapon ready for the Chief of the Orthodox ? For the two Syrians, worse still. They must be Christians, possibly assassins, certainly magicians. The least to be apprehended from them was a spell, an evil eye, perhaps a poisonous incantation. To sum up, one and all were spies ; of that at least there could be no doubt.

Whether Maḥboob, 'Abd-el-'Azeez, and the court in general, seriously partook in the terrors of Feysul, I know not, nor much think it. However, they had the prudence to sing in their master's tune, and all pronounced the danger real and imminent. What measures then might yet avail to avert it ? or how dispose of so many enemies at once ? The unanimous conclusion was that, prudence being the best part of valour, his most sacred Majesty should, without delay, escape from the capital, and from the ill-omened vicinity of so many infidels and sorcerers, spies and assassins, and conceal his royal person in some secure retreat, while due measures should in his absence be taken to sound the intentions and watch the proceedings of these most

suspicious strangers, and to anticipate or prevent their perfidious designs.

Accordingly, hardly had the Nā'ib retired to his appointed dwelling and we to ours, while the Meccans had been stowed away in another nook, but not far off, when Feyṣul, accompanied by Maḥboob, 'Abd-el-'Azeez, and a few others, passed in great secrecy through the Bab-es-Sirr, left the castle, traversed the town as quietly as possible, and buried himself in the recesses of a secluded garden belonging to 'Abd-er-Raḥmān the Wāhhābee. Guards were placed all round the orchard, and hope revived that, what between the remoteness of the spot, the blessings of the pure orthodoxy of its possessor, the thickness of the foliage, and the swords of the negroes, Feyṣul might yet elude the contaminations of polytheism and the perils of assassination, spells, and evil eyes. Meanwhile a respite was thus assured, and leisure gained for better detecting the mystery of iniquity, and baffling it of its aim.

No time was, however, to be lost, and the great engine of Wāhhābee government, its spy system, than which no Tiberius ever organized a better, was set in play. Meanwhile the unconscious conspirators and magicians were innocently engaged in arranging their baggage, and were indulging themselves in the narcotic vapours which they had been unable hitherto from sheer politeness to enjoy; but not till after carefully closing doors and windows, lest the odour of the "shameful" should diffuse itself through the hallowed breezes of the street. Suddenly a modest knock sounds at the door. Quick, pipes are laid aside; Barākat goes to the vestibule to enquire who may be outside, and gives the tobacco-smoke time to evaporate by a minute's delay, before he opens the entrance.

In glided a figure that we were little prepared to see in Ri'ad. Clad in the dress proper to Affghanistan, with an elegant white turban, and the unmistakable features of the north-west Punjab frontiers, 'Abd-el-Ḥameed, the seeming student of the palace, stood before us. A better spy, or one more likely to throw us off our guard, could not have been hit upon. For in addition to his being a stranger like ourselves, and therefore well calculated to attract our sympathy and open our hearts, he was possessed of all that grace of manner and apparent candour which his countrymen can so skilfully assume when

required, and of which some of my readers may not improbably have made experience in the East. Master in the school of dissimulation, so much so that he had even taken in the Wahhābees themselves, who believed him anything but what he really was, he might trust to succeed even with us, in spite of our spells and divining art.

This man was by his own account son of the governor of Balkh, and an orthodox Sonnee of the Haneefee class. Having set out from his native land on a pilgrimage to Mecca, with riches, attendants, and what not, the very king's son of the fairy-tale, he had, so he said, suffered a disastrous shipwreck on some unknown rock in the Persian Gulf; and, harder still, pirates had robbed him of whatever the greedy deep had spared. Servantless, moneyless, companionless, he had arrived on the Wahhābee frontiers, where the fame of Feyṣul's generosity had attracted him to Ri'āḍ, in hope of receiving necessary aid wherewithal to complete his pilgrimage and return to his anxious parents. But once in that earthly paradise of piety and learning, he had opened his eyes to the pure light and unadulterated faith of the Wahhābee, and henceforth resolved to renounce home and all its pleasures, and to pass his remaining days in the study and practice of genuine Islam, amid congenial souls, far from tobacco and polytheism.

Provided by Feyṣul's liberality with a suitable equipment of books and wives, he edified palace and town by his devout prayers and composed exterior; his time was divided between the mosque and the harem, his mouth always full of the praises of God and Feyṣul, his conversation invariably of piety or women. No doubt could be entertained touching the sincerity of his conversion, and the sacrifice made by the fervent proselyte of ancestral halls and rule was everywhere extolled and appreciated. It may seem almost cruel to tarnish such pure gold, or to detract from so justly earned a reputation. But we are now far away from Ri'āḍ, and it will do 'Abd-el-Ḥameed no wrong if another and a truer version of his history is published in England. Native not of Balkh but of Peshawur, not a Sonnee but a Shiya'ee of the Shiya'ees, no governor's son but of plebeian extraction and worse than plebeian morals, he had in a market squabble stabbed a man, and anticipated justice by flight. Wandering about in an exile from which prudence

could not permit him for some years to return, he had fixed on Ri'ad as a convenient retreat till the storm at home should have blown over, and practised on Nejdean gullibility by assuming the disguise which now he bore. But a true Shiya'ee at heart, he never failed to couple every uttered blessing on the Caliphs, the Saḥḥābah, and their living copies around him, with an inward curse on them all, and amused himself with the credulity of men whom he held in his heart for very fools and infidels. Besides, board and lodging, good clothes, and plenty of wives were excellent things, and with such solaces his period of banishment passed by agreeably enough, while waiting till circumstances should permit him a safe return to his own land.

All this we learned subsequently through the Nā'ib, who, himself a native of a cognate country, and in his earlier years a frequent traveller in the upper valley of the Indus, proved, diamond cutting diamond, too sharp for our Peshawuree, and entertained me with a Hindoostanee version of the whole affair. Once on this cue, I set my own wits to work, and drew out of 'Abd-el-Hameed (though this name, too, was a mere alias, but I have forgotten his authentic denomination) sufficient confirmation of whatever the Shirazee had told.

Our Peshawuree or Balkhee sat down, and after a few indifferent remarks began to consult me about some ailment of his outer man. But this not being the exact object of his visit, he soon got off the tack, and commenced cross-questioning and throwing out hints like angling-hooks, in hopes to fish up truth from the bottom of the well. Meanwhile the two Meccans had dropped in, and were in their turn submitted to the same interrogatory system, but were not detained long, since the main purport of their business, namely, begging, was soon understood. So 'Abd-el-Hameed returned to the charge with us; tried me with Hindoostanee, Persian, and even a few words of broken English, but all in vain, and ended by inwardly concluding that the matter was far from satisfactory. Then he rose in a rather abrupt manner, and left us to give his report to those who had sent him.

That this report was highly unfavourable I afterwards learnt. Not that he sincerely imagined our coming to have any dangerous import for the person of Feyṣul, or that we were in truth professors of the black art. But he was afraid of rivals



in the good graces and favours of the palace, and felt like a tradesman who sees an opposition shop opening across the way ; hence he prudently desired to see us as far off as possible, and to this effect spared neither suggestion nor calumny.

Not long had the Peshawuree quitted us, when another and a very different but even more dangerous agent presented himself at our door, with an air bespeaking authority, varnished over by studied meekness, and a downcast eye ever prying to observe unobserved. It was a "Meddey'ye," or "Zelator," one of the secret council and intimate organization of the Ri'ad government.

But considering that my readers are perhaps not sufficiently acquainted with these functionaries, it will be best here to give a slight digression regarding the first origin, the character, and the progress of the "Meddey'ye" institution, and of those who compose it. This will throw more light than anything yet said on the Wahhābee organization, of which the Meddey'yees are, in fact, the mainspring and directors.

Their institution, at least in its present form, is by no means of ancient date ; it belongs to the present reign, and is due to recent events. In the year 1854 or 1855, for precise accuracy of chronology in these countries is utterly hopeless, the world-wide visitation of the cholera, after travelling over the more important and thickly-peopled lands and kingdoms of the East, bethought itself of Central Arabia, hitherto, it might seem, forgotten or neglected by that scourge in the midst of more urgent occupations. Crossing the desert from the west, it fell on Nejed like a thunderbolt, and began its usual ravages, with a success totally unchecked, my readers may well imagine, by any preventive or curative measures. The upper mountain district of Sedeyr alone escaped ; the lower provinces of Yemāmah, Hareek, Woshem, and Dowāsir suffered fearfully, and the 'Aareḍ itself was one of the most severely treated. The capital, lying in a damp valley, and close-built, was depopulated ; a third of its inhabitants are said to have perished within a few weeks ; among the victims were some members of the royal family, and many others of aristocratic descent.

Now, so it was, that for some years previous, relaxation in religious and sectarian peculiarities had been introducing itself into Ri'ad ; prosperity, and yet more the preceding Egyptian

occupation, followed by frequent intercourse with the men and government of Cairo, an intercourse continued during the entire reign of 'Abbas Basha, nor wholly interrupted under that of Sa'eed, had combined to encourage this deplorable falling-away. Usages which, when known only through the medium of polemical treatises and controversial diatribe, excited just horror, now seemed less abominable on practical acquaintance and closer view, so contagious is bad example. The "shameful" had sent up its vapours in the K'hāwahs of the capital, and heads had been seen profaned by the iniquity of silk and gold thread. No reasonable mind could hesitate whence the origin of the cholera; the crime was notorious, the punishment mere justice. Of course the best, indeed the only, remedy for the epidemic was a speedy reform, and an efficacious return to the purity and intolerance of better days.

Feyşul now convoked an assembly of all the principal men in the town. When met, he addressed them in a speech with which I shall not tire the patience of my readers, though my own had to bear with its rehearsal. It consisted mainly of those arbitrary and unadvised interpretations of the ways of Providence to man, unfortunately common everywhere, and justifiable nowhere. The upshot was, that they had all done wrong, very wrong; that great scandals had been given or permitted; that the fine gold had become unquestionably dim, and the silver alloyed with dross, and that their only hope lay in strict search and trial of their ways, with suitable repentance and reform. But for himself, added the monarch, he was now old and infirm, nor able unaided and alone to carry into effect measures proportioned to the gravity of the occasion. Accordingly he discharged the obligation of his own conscience on theirs, and rendered them thus responsible for the longer duration of the cholera, or whatever else might take place, should his timely warning be neglected.

The elders of the town retired, held long consultation, and returning, proposed the following scheme, which received the kingly ratification. From among the most exemplary and zealous of the inhabitants twenty-two were to be selected, and entitled "*Meddey'yeeeah*," "*men of zeal*," or "*Zelators*," such being the nearest word in literal translation, and this I shall henceforth employ, to spare Arab cacophony. Candidates of

the requisite number were soon found and mustered. On these twenty-two Feyṣul conferred absolute power for the extirpation of whatever was contrary to Wahnābee doctrine and practice, and to good morals in general, from the capital firstly, and then from the entire empire. No Roman censors in their most palmy days had a higher range of authority, or were less fettered by all ordinary restrictions. Not only were these Zelators to denounce offenders, but they might also in their own unchallenged right inflict the penalty incurred, beat and fine at discretion, nor was any certain limit assigned to the amount of the mulct, or to the number of the blows. Most comprehensive too was the list of offences brought under the animadversion of these new censors: absence from public prayers, regular attendance five times a day in the public mosques being henceforth of strict obligation; smoking tobacco, taking snuff, or chewing (this last practice, vulgarly entitled "quidding," had been introduced by the jolly tars of Koweyt and other seaports of the Persian Gulf); wearing silk or gold; talking or having a light in the house after night prayers; singing, or playing on any musical instrument; nay, even all street-games of children or childish persons: these were some of the leading articles on the condemned list, and objects of virtuous correction and severity. Besides, swearing by any other name save that of the Almighty, any approach to an invocation, or even ejaculation directed to aught but Him; in short, whatever in word or deed, in conversation or in conduct, might appear to deviate from the exact orthodoxy of the letter of the Coran and the Wahnābee commentary, was to be denounced, or even punished on the spot. Lastly, their censorship extended over whatever might afford suspicion of irregular conduct; for instance, strolling about the streets after nightfall, entering too frequently a neighbour's house, especially at hours when the male denizens may be presumed absent, with any apparent breach of the laws of decorum or decency; all these were rendered offences amenable to cognizance and correctional measures. It is easy to imagine what so wide-reaching a power might become when placed in the hands of interested or vindictive administrators. However, the number of the Zelators themselves, and the innate toughness and resistance of the Arab character, somewhat diminished the ill consequences which might naturally have been expected from this over-absolute and



scarce-defined authority, though many and most atrocious instances of its exercise and abuse were related in my hearing.

These Zelators were bound to a very simple style of dress, devoid of ornament or pretension; they may not even wear the sword, mark of directly temporal or military authority. But in compensation, each one bears in hand a long staff, which serves the double object of official badge and instrument of chastisement, much like the truncheon of our own policeman; this, combined with downcast eyes, slow walk, subdued tone of voice, the head-dress drawn cowl-fashion low over the forehead, but without head-band, and a constant gravity of demeanour, suffices to distinguish them at first sight from the ordinary crowd. Of course, in their conversation, pious texts and ejaculations, accompanied by the forefinger upraised every half-minute at least, in season and out of season, to testify to the unity of God, are even more frequent with them than among the common faithful. Pacing from street to street, or unexpectedly entering the houses to see if there is anything incorrect going on there, they do not hesitate to inflict at once, and without any preliminary form of trial or judgment, the penalty of stripes on the detected culprit, be he who he may; and should their own staves prove insufficient, they straightway call in the assistance of bystanders or slaves, who throw the guilty individual prone on the ground, and then in concert with the Zelator belabour him at pleasure. A similar process is adopted for those whom negligence has kept from public prayer; the Zelator of the quarter, accompanied by a band of the righteous, all well armed with stout sticks, proceeds to the designated dwelling, and demands an entrance, which no one dares refuse. It is then a word and a blow, or rather many blows and few words, till the undevout shortcomer is quickened into new fervour by the most cogent of all *à posteriori* arguments. Should he happen to be absent from home at the moment of the visit, nay, sometimes even after the administration of the healing chastisement, a pledge for future good conduct, as a cloak, a sword, a head-dress, or the like, is taken from the house, nor restored till several days of punctual attendance at the Mesjid have repaired the scandal of past negligence, and proved the sincerity of the conversion by its perseverance. But should any rash individual attempt to resist force by force, he may be



sure of the roughest treatment ; and should he lift his hand against the sacred person of the Zelator, the sacrilegious member is destined to the block and the knife. However, where direct mutilation or capital punishment is due, for instance, in a case of avowed and formal heresy or infidelity, the crime is referred to the tribunal of Feyṣul himself, nor does he fail to prosecute the culprit with the utmost rigour.

Furnished with such powers, and backed up by the whole weight of government, it may be easily supposed that the new broom swept clean, and that the first institution of the Zelators was followed by root-and-branch work. Rank itself was no protection, high birth no shelter, and private or political enmities now found themselves masters of their aim. Djeloo'wee, Feyṣul's own brother, was beaten with rods at the door of the king's own palace for a whiff of tobacco-smoke ; and his royal kinsman could not or would not interfere to save him from undergoing at fifty an ignominy barely endurable at fifteen. Soweylim, the prime minister, and predecessor of Maḥboob, was on a similar pretext, but in reality (so said universal rumour) at the instigation of a competitor for his post, seized one day while on his return homeward from the castle, thrown down, and subjected to so protracted and so cruel a fustigation that he expired on the morrow. If such was the chastisement prepared for the first personages in the state, what could plebeian offenders expect ? Many were the victims, many the backs that smarted, and the limbs crippled or broken. Tobacco vanished, though not *in fumo*, and torn silks strewed the streets or rotted on the dunghills ; the mosques were crowded, and the shops deserted. In a few weeks the exemplary semblance of the outward man of the capital might have moved the admiration of the first Wahnābee himself.

Similar measures were enforced throughout Nejed. Fervent Zelators, armed with rods and Corans, and breathing out vengeance upon all "right-hand and left-hand defections," visited the various towns and villages with the happiest results ; and the entire 'Aareḍ, Sedeyr, Woshem, Yemāmah, and their neighbours, were speedily reformed and remodelled on the pattern of Ri'ad.

But the zeal for revival did not stop here. The "infidels" of Kaseem and Ḥaṣa, along with the backsliders of Ḥareek, were

now to learn that Feysul would not tolerate any longer among them crimes reprobated by the genuine believers, and that they in their turn must conform at least their exterior to the decencies of orthodoxy, whatever might be the fashion of their hearts and minds. Missions, headed by Zelators, were organized, and a crusade against the prevailing scandals of the guilty provinces was set on foot. But in spite of the practical arguments that accompanied the Word, orthodoxy was destined here to meet with but a partial triumph. A strong reaction manifested itself, and in some places, at Bereydah in *Ḳaseem* for example, and at *Zekkārah* in *Ḥaṣa*, blows were returned with interest, and in one village of *Ḳaseem* at least, to my knowledge, the ardour of the Zelator was allayed by a sound ducking in a neighbouring pond. A compromise now took place : dresses wherein silk should not exceed a third part, or at most a half, of the material, were permitted, though with a sigh ; and tobacco vendors or smokers were henceforth to content themselves with observing decent privacy in the sale or consumption of the forbidden article, on which condition they might do as they chose, unmolested, save in the public streets or market-place. Compulsory attendance at prayers was rarely enforced, and the roll-call of names, customary in the mosques of *Nejed*, was elsewhere prudently omitted. However, a certain degree of outward conformity had been attained, and with that Feysul and his Star Chamber were fain to content themselves for the moment, and hope for better times.

Even in *Nejed* and in *Ri'ad* itself the outstretched cord ended by relaxing a little, nor could the unpopularity of the new institution remain wholly concealed. Yet it was kept up, though the cholera, scared no doubt by the tremendous outbreak of orthodox severity, had fled the land ; nor was the theory of the new censorship changed, only its practical exercise assumed a milder form, while the thing itself was carefully maintained, a bulwark against future heaven-sent scourges or earthly fallings-away, and a powerful administrative engine or rod when required. The slaves were indeed less busy than before, and the domestic visits of rarer occurrence ; chastisement was sometimes preceded by admonition, and the dorsal vertebræ of culprits more seldom broken. But the number of the Zelators was constantly filled up, whenever death or retire-

ment occasioned a vacancy ; the nomination of each new candidate depending on themselves, and in concert with Feysul. Twice every week they have official right to a private audience of the king ; the days assigned are Monday and Thursday, the hour sunrise or a little earlier. No small or unimportant favour this from a monarch whose public audiences are at the very most once a month, and who in private is almost inaccessible to all save his prime minister, his negro slaves, and his harem. The Zelators are, in fact, the real council of state ; and no question of peace or war, alliance or treaty, but is suggested or modified by them. They represent what we may with all due respect entitle the High Conservative party, amid that inevitable tendency of all organized society to advancement, from which not even Wahhābees are exempt. But more of this and of them hereafter.

Meanwhile I might almost leave my readers to suppose in what light such a body, and those who compose it, are regarded by the mass of the population. Surrounded with all the deference and all the odium consequent on their office and character, they meet everywhere with marks of open respect and covert distrust and hatred. Are a circle of friends met in the freedom of conversation ? let a Zelator enter, their voices are hushed ; and when talk is resumed, it follows a tack in which the recording angels of Islam themselves would find nothing to modify. Are a bevy of companions walking gaily with too light a gait down the street ? at the meeting of a Zelator, all compose their pace, and direct their eyes in momentary modesty on the ground. Is a stealthy lamp lighted at unreasonable hours ? at a rap on the shutters suspected for that of the Zelator, the "glim is doused," and all is silent in darkness. Or, worse than all, is the forbidden pipe sending up its sinful fumes in some remote corner ? at the fatal tap on the outer door, the unholy implement is hastily emptied out into the hearth, and then carefully hidden under the carpet, while everyone hurries to wash his mouth and mustachios, and by the perfume of cloves or aromatic herbs give himself an orthodox smell once more. In short, schoolboys caught out by a severe under-master at an illicit prank, pious ladies surprised in reading the last French novel, or teetotallers suddenly discovered with a half-empty black bottle and tumbler on the table, never look



more awkward, more silly, and more alarmed than Nejdeans on these occasions when a Zelator comes upon them.

I was often more especially amused (to anticipate incidents of the following days) by the figure Aboo'Eysa used to make in such a scrape. He knew the Zelators for what they were, and they too knew him for what he was ; but high court protection and a position of wealth and influence in the one party, and an official character not to be insulted with impunity in the other, occasioned a degree of mutual forbearance, curiously constrained and transparently comic. While the fury of religious renovation lasted, Aboo'Eysa had prudently kept out of harm's way; and if indispensable business drew him to Ri'ad, would pitch a tent without the walls, there with his boon-companions to smoke, eat and drink, and curse the Zelators, nor enter the city save by stealth, and to visit the palace only. Now that the first fervour, like all first fervours, had somewhat cooled down, he ventured on lodging within the town, and only took care to be out of the way on Fridays or at prayer-time. However, while he was in the capital his silken robe judiciously disappeared, his ornamental head-kerchief was folded up and laid aside to make place for an old cotton rag, and he studiously avoided certain devouter quarters of the town and the vicinity of the great Wahnabee family. As for paying any one of them a visit, he would as soon have called on the fiend himself. But when unavoidable necessity or chance brought him in their way, he did his best to look very good, and measured his conversation with suitable decorum of phrase. They, on the other hand, condescendingly winked at frailties decently though imperfectly veiled, and affected not to notice what could not be wholly hidden. However, in the moments of mutual absence, neither spared the other: Aboo'Eysa named them "dogs," "hypocrites," and much more ; while the fingers of the Zelators tingled to be at the praiseworthy occupation of "purifying his hide," for so the profane technicality of Nejed styles the merited chastisement of dissenters and ill-doers. But it is time to return to our new acquaintance, the occasion of this long digression.

'Abbood, for such was his name, though I never met the like before or after in Arabia Proper, however common it may be in Syria and Lebanon, took a different and a more efficacious



mode of espionage than 'Abd-el-Hameed had done before him. Affecting to consider us Mahometans, and learned ones too, he entered at once on religious topics, on the true character of Islam, its purity or corruptions, and enquired much after the present teaching and usages of Damascus and the North, evidently in the view of catching us in our words. But he had luckily encountered his match; for every citation of the Coran we replied with two, and proved ourselves intimately acquainted with the "greater" and the "lesser" polytheism of foreign nations and heterodox Mahometans, with the commentaries of Beydowee and the tales of the Hadeeth, till our visitor, now won over to confidence, launched out full-sail on the sea of discussion, and thereby rendered himself equally instructive and interesting to men who had nothing more at heart than to learn the tenets of the sect from one of its most zealous professors, nay, a Zelator in person. In short, he ended by becoming half a friend, and his regrets at our being, like other Damasccenes, yet in the outer porch of darkness, were tempered by a hope, which he did not disguise, of at least putting a window into our porch for its better enlightenment.

Other visitors came and went; Aboo-'Eysa, too, as in duty bound, called on us towards evening to see if all was well, and how we were lodged. The locality did not much please us, because too near to the royal palace, almost, in fact, belonging to it; besides, the apartments were over large, nor could we arrange them with anything like comfort for their very size; our furniture was too limited for the task, and our means also. So we begged Aboo-'Eysa to look out for us another and a more proportionate dwelling, suited to our modest circumstances and the character of our profession. Many had indeed already demanded medical advice and assistance, nor could any other occupation suit us better in this town. Our friend promised, and kept his word.

Next day, in the forenoon, while we were sauntering about the market-place, we met the minister 'Abd-el-'Azeez, who had that morning returned to the capital. With a smiling face and an air of great benignity he took us aside, and informed us that the king did not consider Ri'ad a proper field for our medical skill; that we had better at once continue our journey to Hofhoof, whither Aboo-'Eysa should conduct us straightway; and

that the monarch would furnish each of us with a camel, a new suit of clothes, and money.

To make a bridge of gold (even though the sum offered was small) for a flying enemy is a wise measure, whether in Macedonia or in Nejed ; and Feysul thought that he could not better ensure his safety from our spells and incantations than by making us his friends, but at a reasonable distance. We, in our innocence, did not yet know the reason of this manoeuvre, and attributed it to other and lighter motives. So, instead of acquiescing, we represented to 'Abd-el-'Azeez that our stay at Ri'ad would be alike advantageous to the bodies of the townsmen and to our own purses ; whereas an over-speedy departure might sound ill, and prejudice our success even at Hofhoof. He promised to consult Feysul once more upon the matter, but gave us to understand that there was little prospect of an "amendment" in the royal decree. Of course our persistence in wishing thus to remain at Ri'ad could have no other effect than to confirm the timid suspicions of the old tyrant ; but this we knew not.

Meanwhile the privy council assembled around the king in the garden had come to a somewhat similar resolution about the Persians, whom Feysul determined to dismiss at the shortest possible notice, though with fair words and some trifling present, but without personal audience or effective redress. For this he had more than one reason ; but it was the dread of assassination that worked strongest of all on his evil conscience.

However, Arab prudence made him unwilling to precipitate matters ; and a little after noon he sent for Aboo-'Eysa, who immediately went to the garden where his Majesty lay concealed. What passed on that occasion we afterwards learnt in detail from different sources. Feysul received Aboo-'Eysa with an air of grave severity, and reproached him for having brought so ill-conditioned a cargo to the palace gates. Our guide made all possible excuses, and was backed up in his apology by the prime minister Maḥboob, a staunch friend of Aboo-'Eysa's, or at least of his presents. For what regarded the Persians, it was resolved on better thoughts to give them some kind of satisfaction ; but Feysul, ever fearful of treachery, could not yet be persuaded to receive the Nā'ib in person ; and accordingly that part of the business was committed to Maḥ-

boob, who was to give the Shirazee a hearing, and afterwards make his report to the king. Then came our affair : here the monarch showed himself extremely refractory, and Maḥboob partook, or seemed to partake, in his uneasiness. Indeed, Feysul was half inclined to send us away, not to Ḥaṣa, but by the very route on which we had come ; an ominous proceeding for us, and more likely to conclude in having us “packed with post-horse up to heaven,” than conveyed by the leisurely pace of camels to Kaseem or Shomer. At last the old king softened down, and concluded by saying that we might go on to Ḥaṣa, for the furtherance whereof he again proffered the liberal assistance already notified by 'Abd-el-'Azeez : but both he and his counsellors were decidedly averse to our remaining any longer in Ri'ad.

When the Nā'ib heard this news, he burst out into a new fit of passion, and said much of a very undiplomatic nature regarding the king and his ministers ; nor could he well understand how a Bedouin, for so he persisted in styling Feysul, could treat with such haughty coolness the majesty of the Shah of Persia, represented in his envoy. However there was no help for it, so he smoothed his ruffled brow, chewed a little opium, smoked a nargheelah, and set about drawing up a long list of grievances and damages for the perusal of Maḥboob on their approaching interview.

Our own position was now an awkward one, nor did we exactly know how to amend it. We were thoroughly determined not to quit Ri'ad till after fully satisfying our curiosity relative to its government, people, and whatever else it contained ; yet how to prolong our stay ? To persist on our own score in remaining, after a twice-repeated order to depart, would have been sheer madness, and must inevitably lead to the worst consequences ; concealment or disguise was out of the question. Aboo'Eysa was no less annoyed than ourselves ; our friendship, once commenced at Bereydah, had by frequent intercourse there, and yet more by our journey together from Kaseem to Ri'ad, become a real intimacy ; and though he did not precisely comprehend our object in so vehemently desiring a longer sojourn in the Wahhābee capital, he sympathised with our vexation at so silly yet so serious an obstacle to our wishes. At last, after much thinking and discussion, he proposed to try a



measure with the efficacy of which long experience had rendered him particularly conversant. The king, though obstinate and timorous, was likely in a matter of this sort to let himself ultimately be guided by the advice of his ministers. If Mahboob and 'Abd-el-'Azeez could be brought round to our cause, a revision of the royal edict might then be confidently expected. Now, incorruptibility was no more a virtue of the Nejdean court than Charles the Second's, or Louis-Philippe's, and that Aboo-'Eysa had the best possible reasons to know. However, even here a direct offer of minted coin would not look well. In this dilemma, two pounds' weight of scented wood, or "'Ood," a special favourite with Arabs, and above all with Nejdeans, might prove a propitiatory offering of good savour, and render our modest petition more acceptable and efficacious. This he offered to procure at his own cost, and to manage its presentation. We, my readers may well suppose, made no difficulty. Night had already set in; and 'Aboo-'Eysa was not the man to delay in a business where time was so precious. He went at once on his quest; and his acquaintance with the people of the town enabled him soon to find the desired perfumes, which he returned to show us, and then departed a second time, without delay, to leave them in our name at the doors of Mahboob and 'Abd-el-'Azeez. Late in the night he returned, and bade us await in sure hope of a more favourable intimation on the morrow.

Nor were his expectations deceived. Before noon he was again summoned to the suburban retreat of royalty, and there told, that since, all things maturely considered, the town of Ri'ad did seriously stand in need of an Æsculapius, we might be permitted to remain in that quality, and freely exercise our profession under Feysul's own patronage, without fear of opposition or disquiet.

I have said some pages back that Djeloo'wee's palace soon appeared to Barakāt and myself not well adapted to our medical avocations, and besides too near the castle of Feysul for strangers and "infidels" like ourselves. In consequence, Aboo-'Eysa had promised to look us out a more suitable dwelling-place. Next morning, before we met 'Abd-el-'Azeez, our guide visited us, and told us that a very comfortable abode had been put at our disposition, free of expense. This Aboo-'Eysa had managed



through some friend of his at court, and without consulting Feysul or his ministers. Without delay we went to look at the proffered quarters.

Leaving the palace of Djeloo'wee, we passed down the great street to the market-place, which we next crossed diagonally, till we had the castle-gate opposite to us on the other side; and then threaded a labyrinth of narrow by-streets, till a walk of about eight minutes brought us in front of a high covered passage; through this we entered a broad *impasse*, on either side of which were several small habitations, while a large two-storeyed house closed the farther end. This stately mansion was now tenanted by the Nā'ib Moḥammed-'Alee and his train; its original owner, a man of good family, and wealthy in Arab estimation, had become obnoxious to the "Zelators" of the town, and was compelled to anticipate a sound palm-stick thrashing, or worse, by a timely retreat to Ḥaṣa, where we afterwards met him—one of hundreds in the like predicament. His house was confiscated, not indeed absolutely, but in a provisional manner, by the government, and its vacant walls, by order of Feysul, now sheltered the Nā'ib and his companions. Some way down the "Place" on the right, a side door gave admittance to a humbler dwelling, belonging, like many of the town houses hereabouts, to the palace, and rented on lease. It was in every respect fitted to our manner of life; and if its tenants, our predecessors, suffered any inconvenience from evacuating the premises in our favour, this was fully made up to them by the munificent present of six Djedeedahs (a term to be explained afterwards), or about two shillings English, which our free and gracious liberality bestowed upon them. Whence my readers may infer, that the value of money in Ri'ad, and its proportion to house-rent, are not far from what they appear to have been in London under the reign of Edward II, or even later.

Here we were possessors of no less than three apartments: the first a reception-room, or K'hāwah, near the entrance, with its appropriate vestibule and fireplace; it was long in form and somewhat dark, like most K'hāwahs at Ri'ad, where the southerly climate and increasing heat renders the construction of apartments subservient to the greatest shelter obtainable from the sun's access, much more than is wont at Ḥā'yel, or even in Kaseem and Sedeyr. In the interior, and behind the K'hāwah,

was a courtyard, in the middle of which a fine and odoriferous shrub of the verbenæ species attested the semi-sentimental rurality of Nejdean townsmen; the practice of nursing one or two plants, to give a city residence something of a country air, not being confined to London and its balcony flower-pots. Within the courtyard stood also a kitchen, separated from the rest of the dwelling. On the other side we had a good-sized chamber, of which I made my druggery and consultation room. Its roof was flat, like that of the K'hāwah, and both were surrounded by a high parapet; a wooden staircase led up to the one terrace, and a flight of stone steps to the other. Another small room had been converted by the late tenants into a store for furniture and provisions not requisite for immediate use, and of this they kept the keys, to our exclusion.

We were here not too far from the market-place, yet at a decorous distance from the palace, and exactly in the quarter where dwell the fewest Zelators and none of the old Wahhābee family; indeed, this part of the town had the reputation, bad or good, of being not only the least bigoted, but even a sort of stronghold for the party of progress, since even Ri'ād owns such. Lastly, we became hereby next-door neighbours to the talkative Nā'ib, whose mixed shrewdness and simplicity, ready tongue and broken Arabic, rendered him always an amusing and sometimes an instructive companion. In short, we thought ourselves fortunate in this second selection of lodgings, and took it for a favourable augury for our business at Ri'ād. Without demur we cheerfully fell to putting all things in order, and became decent housekeepers in our way.

Flour, rice, meat, and coffee were, or rather should have been, regularly furnished us from the palace, of which we were considered the guests. But finding that we did not much stand in need of the royal liberality, and that a little show of independence would do no harm, we were not over-diligent in asking for or even in receiving the supply, and it often went by our easy connivance to the private advantage of the purveyors. Only we insisted rigorously in obtaining our stated allowance of coffee, for it was excellent, and our consumption thereof unbounded. Aboo'Eysa, who passed two-thirds of his leisure hours under our roof, had set us up in coffee-pots and other requisites; to procure a new mortar, similar to that carried off

by the faithless Ḥabbāsh at Bereydah, had been our first care on arriving here. Now our guide was a desperate coffee-drinker, so were also my companion and myself ; moreover, we made it a rule that no one should enter our premises without a dose of this nature, at any rate ; so that from earliest morn till latest evening, our fire was never extinguished, nor had our cups time to dry.

I must here beg my reader's permission for a brief episode or digression on the subject of the above-mentioned beverage. In my quality of an Oriental of many years' standing, I am annoyed at the ignorance yet prevailing on so important a matter in the enlightened West ; and as a doctor (at least in Arabia), I cannot see with silent indifference the nervous systems of my fellow-men so rudely tampered with, or their mucous membranes so unseasonably drenched, as is too often the case to the west of the Bosphorus.

Be it then known, by way of prelude, that coffee though one in name is manifold in fact ; nor is every kind of berry entitled to the high qualifications too indiscriminately bestowed on the comprehensive genus. The best coffee, let cavillers say what they will, is that of the Yemen, commonly entitled "Mokha," from the main place of exportation. Now I should be sorry to incur a lawsuit for libel or defamation from our wholesale or retail salesmen ; but were the particle *NOT* prefixed to the countless labels in London shop-windows that bear the name of the Red Sea haven, they would have a more truthy import than what at present they convey. Very little, so little indeed as to be quite inappreciable, of the Mocha or Yemen berry ever finds its way westward of Constantinople. Arabia itself, Syria, and Egypt consume fully two-thirds, and the remainder is almost exclusively absorbed by Turkish and Armenian *œsophagi*. Nor do these last get for their limited share the best or the purest. Before reaching the harbours of Alexandria, Jaffa, Beyrouth, &c., for further exportation, the Mokhan bales have been, while yet on their way, sifted and resifted, grain by grain, and whatever they may have contained of the hard, rounded, half-transparent, greenish-brown berry, the only one really worth roasting and pounding, has been carefully picked out by experienced fingers ; and it is the less generous residue of flattened, opaque, and whitish grains which alone, or almost alone, goes on board

the shipping. So constant is this selecting process, that a gradation regular as the degrees on a map may be observed in the quality of Mokha, that is, Yemen, coffee even within the limits of Arabia itself, in proportion as one approaches to or recedes from Wadi Nejran and the neighbourhood of Mecca, the first stages of the radiating mart. I have myself been times out of number an eyewitness of this sifting; the operation is performed with the utmost seriousness and scrupulous exactness, reminding me of the diligence ascribed to American diamond-searchers, when scrutinising the torrent sands for their minute but precious treasure.

The berry, thus qualified for foreign use, quits its native land on three main lines of export—that of the Red Sea, that of the Inner Hejaz, and that of Kaseem. The terminus of the first line is Egypt, of the second Syria, of the third Nejed and Shomer. Hence Egypt and Syria are, of all countries without the frontiers of Arabia, the best supplied with its specific produce, though under the restrictions already stated; and through Alexandria or the Syrian seaports Constantinople and the North obtain their diminished share. But this last stage of transport seldom conveys the genuine article, except by the intervention of private arrangements and personal friendship or interest. Where mere sale and traffic are concerned, substitution of an inferior quality, or an adulteration almost equivalent to substitution, frequently takes place in the different storehouses of the coast, till whatever Mokha-marked coffee leaves them for Europe and the West, is often no more like the real offspring of the Yemen plant than the logwood preparations of a London fourth-rate retail wine-seller resemble the pure libations of an Oporto vineyard.

The second species of coffee, by some preferred to that of Yemen, but in my poor opinion inferior to it, is the growth of Abyssinia; its berry is larger, and of a somewhat different and a less heating flavour. It is, however, an excellent species; and whenever the rich land that bears it shall be permitted by man to enjoy the benefits of her natural fertility, it will probably become an object of extensive cultivation and commerce. With this stops, at least in European opinion and taste, the list of coffee, and begins the list of beans.

Here first and foremost stands the produce of India, with a



little, similar to it in every respect, from the plantations of 'Omān. This class supplies almost all coffee-drinkers, from the neighbourhood of Ḍafar to Baṣrah, and thence up to Bagdad and Moṣoul; Arabs, Persians, Turks, Curdes, be they who they may, have there no other beverage. To one unaccustomed to what Yemen supplies, the Indian variety may seem tolerable, or even agreeable. But without any affectation of virtuoso nicety, I must say that for one fresh arrived from Nejed and Ḳaseem it is hardly potable. The distorted and irregular form of the berry, its blackish stain, and above all the absence of the semi-transparent alabaster-like appearance peculiar to the good Yemanite variety, renders the difference between the two kinds appreciable to the unassisted eye, not only to the palate.

It is possible that time and care may eventually render Indian coffee almost a rival of the Yemen, or at least of the Abyssinian. Hitherto it certainly is not, though it might be hard to say to what particular causes, inherent in soil, climate, or cultivation, its inferiority is ascribable.

American coffee holds, in the judgment of all Orientals, the very last rank; and the deterioration of this product in the New World from what it is in the Old, is no less remarkable than that observed in rice, tea, &c., and is of an analogous character.

Of Batavian coffee I purposely say nothing, having never to my knowledge tasted it. I hear it sometimes praised, but by Europeans; Orientals never mentioned it before me, perhaps they confounded it with the Indian.

While we were yet in the Djowf, I described with sufficient minuteness how the berry is prepared for actual use; nor is the process any way varied in Nejed or other Arab lands. But in Nejed an additional spicing of saffron, cloves, and the like, is still more common; a fact which is easily explained by the want of what stimulus tobacco affords elsewhere. A second consequence of non-smoking among the Arabs is the increased strength of their coffee decoctions in Nejed, and the prodigious frequency of their use; to which we must add the larger "finjans," or coffee-cups, here in fashion. So sure are men, when debarred of one pleasure or excitement, to make it up by another.

As for us, installed in the manner already described, and with a month and more of quiet residence before us, we assorted our domestic arrangements, and agreed on a sort of division of labour. Aboo'Eysa was to keep up what I may call our foreign relations, to bring us news from court, put the great ones there into good humour with us, and give us everywhere a first-rate medical reputation. Barakāt was to do the household work, purchase daily necessities, cook when occasion required it—all, in short, except the coffee department, which Aboo'Eysa reserved to himself. For myself, I was to be the great and learned Æsculapius, pound medicines, treat the cases, "look wiser than any man could possibly be," like Lord Thurlow, and talk correspondingly.

Certainly we had not to complain of want of occupation. But before introducing the motley crowd that besieges our door, or unravelling the threads of the strange intrigues which ran through this period of our travelling life like the underplot of a novel, and ended, novel-like, in a wild catastrophe, let us take a morning stroll through the town, and obtain thereby a general knowledge of Ri'ad and its inhabitants.

It is about sunrise; little folks like ourselves are up and stirring, and great ones, like the king and his court, have lain down to sleep. What! to sleep? Even so; for having all in Wāhhābee devoutness risen by starlight to anticipate congregational morning prayers, with private protestations and Coranic readings to their hearts' content, and having next assisted at the protracted ceremonies of matutinal worship, drawled out to a most intolerable length by some sour-looking "Zelator" or "Meṭow'waa'" (my readers are by this time familiar with these terms), they have now turned in again for a subsidiary nap of about two hours, till a suitable elevation of the sun in the forenoon shall reawake them to the supererogatory prayers of Dhoḥa, and then to daily life. However, the less dignified or less devout, like ourselves, are up and about their business, enjoying too the cool air, for the sun's first rays are tempered by a light mist, habitual in this valley during the winter half of the year.

We wish to buy dates, onions, and butter—all three first-rate articles in the 'Aareḍ. Dates are here of many varieties; the red ones are the best, but certain long yellow dates, without

kernels, are particularly cheap and of good flavour. As for the onions of 'Aared, I never saw the like elsewhere, either for size or quality. Pity that the angels of Islam do not agree with me in approving them; hence good Wahnābees can only eat onions with the precaution of careful mouth-rinsing and hand-washing afterwards, especially if prayer-time be near, lest the odour—not of sanctity—should compel the guardian spirits to keep their distance, and thus leave the worshippers to unassisted and defective devotions. Luckily soap or potash is in plenty, and besides there are here many not good Wahnābees, and we are of their number. Butter is whitish, and sold in the form of small round cakes, much as in Kaseem; my Indian readers will not require the remark that this delicacy has to be constantly kept in water to prevent its melting.

We wrap our head-gear, like true Arabs, round our chins, put on our grave-looking black cloaks, take each a long stick in hand, and thread the narrow streets intermediate between our house and the market-place at a funeral pace, and speaking in an undertone. Those whom we meet salute us, or we salute them; be it known that the lesser number should always be the first to salute the greater, he who rides him who walks, he who walks him who stands, the stander the sitter, and so forth; but never should a man salute a woman; difference of age or even of rank between men does not enter into the general rules touching the priority of salutation. If those whom we have accosted happen to be acquaintances or patients, or should they belong to the latitudinarian school, our salutation is duly returned. But if, by ill fortune, they appertain to the strict and high orthodox party, an under-look with a half-sowl in silence is their only answer to our greeting. Whereat we smile, Malvolio-like, and pass on.

At last we reach the market-place; it is full of women and peasants, selling exactly what we want to buy, besides meat, firewood, milk, &c. &c.; around are customers, come on errands like our own. We single out a tempting basket of dates, and begin haggling with the unbeautiful Phyllis, seated beside her rural store. We find the price too high. "By Him who protects Feysul," answers she; "I am the loser at that price." We insist. "By Him who shall grant Feysul a long life, I cannot bate it," she replies. We have nothing to oppose to



such tremendous asseverations, and accede or pass on, as the case may be.

Half of the shops, namely, those containing grocery, household articles of use, shoemakers' stalls and smithies, are already open and busily thronged. For the capital of a strongly centralized empire is always full of strangers, come will they nill they on their several affairs. But around the butchers' shops awaits the greatest human and canine crowd: my readers, I doubt not, know that the only licensed scavengers throughout the East are the dogs. Nejdeans are great flesh-eaters, and no wonder, considering the cheapness of meat (a fine fat sheep costs at most five shillings, often less), and the keenness of mountaineer appetites. I wish that the police regulations of the city would enforce a little more cleanliness about these numerous shambles; every refuse is left to cumber the ground at scarce two yards' distance. But dogs and dry air much alleviate the nuisance—a remark I made before at Ḥā'yel and Bereydah; it holds true for all Central Arabia.

But before we pursue our walk, let us consider a little more closely the personages now gathered on the space frowned over by the high castle-walls, and limited by the massive colonnade of Feysul's secret gallery, and the shops and houses which complete the irregular square. Some townsmen of good appearance are already present, nor does their outer semblance much differ from the wont of Shomer or Kaseem, except by a greater simplicity of dress and a somewhat lower stature and duskier complexion. Perhaps the general absence of the long "love-locks," so general in the two districts above mentioned, is the most remarkable feature of diversity. But there are many strangers here too, and some hardly less foreigners than ourselves. That slender and swarthy form, clad in a saffron-dyed vest of a closer cut than the ample Nejdean shirt, with a crooked dagger at his girdle, and a short yellow stick in his hand, is a native of the outskirts of 'Omān, a land with which the Wahnābees have now not unfrequent nor always friendly doings. That other in a party-coloured overdress, with a large blue turban fringed red and yellow, overshadowing a cast of features totally unlike those of Central Arabia, and somewhat verging on the Persian or the Indian type, is an inhabitant of Baḥreyn; commerce or tribute has dragged him here, sore against his



will ; for, like his 'Omānite brother, with whom he appears on terms of great familiarity, he is only thinking how to make the best of a bad bargain, and then get away faster than he came. The servants of our friend the Nā'ib, with their rakish Bagdad air, and the wrinkled ill-tempered Meccans, may be easily distinguished in the crowd. But here comes a procession ; it is a great man from Medinah, detesting and detested by all around, who, with his numerous attendants richly clad, himself rustling in silk and embroidery, has found his way to Ri'ād on business of high import ; perhaps to intercede, but in vain, for his friends in 'Oneyzah, perhaps to concert some wicked scheme in the Wahnābee interest for the downfall of the present Shereef. Be that as it may, all frown at him, and he frowns at all : I know not on which side is the deeper contempt and hatred.

Close by I see a tall slender figure, remarkably handsome, and clad in a not inelegant though unadorned dress. It is Rāfia', one of the Sedeyree family, a chief esteemed alike for courage in war and for prudence in peace ; but now, like all his relatives, under an official cloud, because belonging to the too-national party of the province, and suspected of a want of sincere attachment to the 'Aareḍ dynasty. Possibly these suspicions are not wholly out of place ; and were it known at court, as it is, though under the rose, to Aboo-'Eysa and myself, that those thin lips not unfrequently inhale a certain smoke of American origin, Rāfia' would, I fear, be held for even worse than he is at present. Territorial disputes furnish the pretext of his presence here ; the desire of his kinsman 'Abd-el-Mahsin-es-Sedeyree to find out what chance he has of being reinstated in his ancestral authority, is the real but hidden motive.

Then pushes along through the crowd, dragging his cloak with Bedouin carelessness on the ground till its lower edge becomes an irregular fringe of torn thread, a chief of 'Oṭeybah or Ajmān. Formerly masters, one of Western, the other of Eastern Nejed, during the anarchy which followed the Egyptian war, these tribes were the first to feel the sword of 'Abd-Allah, son of Feyṣul, and after counting their slaughtered warriors by hundreds, and their plundered camels by thousands, reluctantly assumed the semblance of compliance and the reality of submission. Now compelled, like Pope's ghosts, to haunt the places where their freedom died, they pay melancholy visits to

Ri'ad, and loiter for months together in the streets, awaiting an audience of their "Uncle" Feysul, who gives them to drink full draughts from the bitter cup of contempt and conquest.—*Væ victis* in Arabia and all over the world.

Amid the rabble are many other elements, exotic to Ri'ad, though never wholly absent from it. Camel drivers from Zulphah, who in their frequent intercourse with Zobeyr and Başrah have alloyed Wahnabee gravity and Nejdean decency with the devil-may-care way of those ambiguous lands half Shiya'ee, half infidel; some ill-conditioned youth, who having run away from his father or the Meṭow'waa' at Ri'ad, has awhile sought liberty and fortune among the sailors of Koweyt or Ṭāroot, and returned with morals and manners worthy of Wapping or Portsmouth; some thin Yemanee pedlar, come up by Wadi Nejrān and Dowāsir to slip quietly in and out through the streets of the capital and laugh at all he sees; perhaps some Belooch or Candahar darweesh, like those who accompanied us a month ago to Bereydah, and who here awaits companions with whom to cross the eastern arm of the desert on his way to the Persian Gulf; mixed with these, the beggars of Dowāsir, more fanatic, more viciously ill-tempered, and more narrow in heart and head than the men of 'Aared themselves, with the addition of a laziness, meanness, and avarice quite their own; close by, some young, lean, consumptive-looking student, who, cursed with a genius, has come to study at Ri'ad, where he lives on the Coran and the scanty alms of the palace; his head full of true orthodox learning, and his belly empty or nearly so; and others less significant, each on "his business and desire, such as it is," might an Arab Hamlet say.

Barakāt and I resolved on continuing our walk through the town. Ri'ad is divided into four quarters: one the north-eastern, to which the palaces of the royal family, the houses of the state officers, and the richer class of proprietors and government men belong. Here the dwellings are in general high, and the streets tolerably straight and not over-narrow; but the ground level is low, and it is perhaps the least healthy locality of all. Next the north-western, where we are lodged; a large irregular mass of houses, varying in size and keeping from the best to the worst; here strangers, and often certain equivocal characters, never wanting in large towns, however strictly regu-

lated, chiefly abide ; here too are many noted for disaffection, and harbouring other tenets than those of the son of 'Abd-el-Wahhāb, men prone to old Arab ways and customs in "Church and State," to borrow our own analogous phrase ; here are country chiefs, here Bedouins and natives of Zulphah and the outskirts find a lodging ; here, if anywhere, is tobacco smoked or sold, and the Coran neglected in proportion. However, I would not have my readers to think our entire neighbourhood so absolutely disreputable. Even here certain virtuous Meṭow'waa's and holy Zelators shine like lights in a dark place, and serve for good examples or spies among a population highly edified, no doubt, by the very virtue that it has not the courage to imitate.

But we gladly turn away our eyes from so dreary a view to refresh them by a survey of the south-western quarter, the chosen abode of formalism and orthodoxy. In this section of Ri'ad inhabit the most zealous Meṭow'waa's, the most energetic Zelators, here are the most irreproachable five-prayers-a-day Nejdeans, and all the flower of Wahhābee purity. Above all, here dwell the principal survivors of the family of the great religious Founder, the posterity of 'Abd-el-Wahhāb escaped from the Egyptian sword, and free from every stain of foreign contamination. Mosques of primitive simplicity and ample space, where the great dogma, not however confined to Ri'ad, that "we are exactly in the right, and every one else is in the wrong," is daily inculcated to crowds of auditors, overjoyed to find Paradise all theirs and none's but theirs ; smaller oratories or Muṣallas, wells for ablution, and Ca'abah-directed niches adorn every corner, and fill up every interval of house or orchard. The streets of this quarter are open, and the air healthy, so that the invisible blessing is seconded by sensible and visible privileges of Providence. Think not, gentle reader, that I am indulging in gratuitous or self-invented irony ; I am only rendering expression for expression, and almost word for word, the talk of true Wahhābees, when describing the model quarter of their model city. This section of the town is spacious and well-peopled, and flourishes, the citadel of national and religious intolerance, pious pride, and genuine Wahhābeeism.

Lastly, the south-eastern quarter, entitled the "Khazīḳ," it is also large, and more thickly inhabited than any other, but



deficient in individuals of note and wealth ; here the lower classes of the population find in general their abode, and peasants and other incomers from the surrounding villages their lodging. This is naturally the worst built and worst kept part of the town, the ground is too low, and the air not healthy ; I was told that the ravages of the cholera here in 1854-5 were fearful, and can well believe it.

There is no distinct separation otherwise than by broad streets between these several quarters, no gates, no wall of division. However, each is really considered as a municipal whole—"circle," Parisians might call it (a clumsy denomination, because it implies continual interstices or intersections)—and each one has its own name, but I have forgotten those given to the first three sections. The word "*Khazik*," applied to the fourth, signifies "crowded" or "stifling." In the second and fourth quarters we meet with hardly any house-enclosed gardens or orchards ; a few occur in the first, and more in the third ; but the general rule of Nejed that the gardens should be for the most part without the town-circuit, holds good in Ri'ad also.

The junction-point or centre in which these divisions meet and intersect is the market-place, with the royal palace adjoining it on one side, and the great mosque or *Djāmia'* on the other ; this word *Djāmia'* means, literally, "collecting" or "uniting," because here attends the great concourse of Friday worshippers to the full and official performance of public service, elsewhere somewhat curtailed. Hence, too, Friday itself is called "*Djema'*," i. e. "collection." In no Nejdean town is there more than one authentic *Djāmia'* ; the other places of prayer are entitled "*Mesjids*," or, if small, "*Muṣallas*." In this point they conform themselves better than other Mahometans to the tradition of the Prophet, who would never have approved the multiplication of *Djāmia'*s, customary in Syria, Egypt, Turkey, &c. The *Djāmia'* of Ri'ad is a large flat-roofed parallelogram, supported on square wooden pillars thickly coated with earth ; the building is low, and has no pretensions to architectural beauty. Barakāt and myself calculated the space between the long rows of columns, and found that it could contain above two thousand individuals at a time ; and an equal number can without difficulty find their place within the open courtyard in



front. Mahometans when at prayer leave a considerable space between their ranks to allow room for prostration without striking their heads on the heels of the row before them. Hence my readers may conclude the size of this huge but inelegant construction. Tower or "Ma'dinah" (Minaret, we generally call it) there is none; but in its stead a small platform slightly raised from the roof-level; above the Mihrab, or station allotted to the Imām at time of prayers, stands on the roof a sort of closet or small apartment, into which old Feyṣul finds admittance on Fridays by the covered gallery before described, and acts invisible Imām to the assembly below. No mats or carpets; reason why—Mahomet and his companions the Saḥ-ḥābah did not employ such; in compensation, the ground is strewn with small pebbles, needlessly annoying to the shin-bones and knees of the faithful.

Besides this great mosque, the principal one in the town, there are thirty or more small ones, or Mesjids, in the different quarters, some of them of spacious dimensions, especially that wherein the Ḳaḍee 'Abd-el-Laṭeef ordinarily acts as Imām, and that which is honoured by the daily presence of 'Abd-Allah, the heir-apparent. This latter edifice is in the first quarter of the city, the other in the third; both attract attention by their size and neatness, but are, like the rest, perfectly unadorned. In each and all the names of those whom vicinity obliges to attendance are read over morning and evening; a muster-call, the better to ensure presence and detect defaulters. The "voluntary system" has few partisans in Ri'āḍ.

Round the whole town run the walls, varying from twenty to thirty feet in height; they are strong, in good repair, and defended by a deep trench and embankment. Beyond them are the gardens, much similar to those of Ḳaseem, both in arrangement and produce, despite the difference of latitude, here compensated by a higher ground level. But immediately to the south, in Yemāmah, the eye remarks a change in the vegetation to a more tropical aspect; of this, however, I will not say more for the present.

A striking feature in this southerly slope of the central plateau, is the much greater abundance of water here than on its northern terrace in Sedeir. This comparative moisture of the soil and of the atmosphere, the latter being, in fact, a con-

sequence of the former, is first perceptible about Horeymelah, whence it increases progressively southward, till it attains its maximum in the Yemāmah; farther on towards Hareek and Dowāsir it again diminishes, partly, I suppose, from the growing distance from the mountainous district, partly from the vicinity of the Great Desert and its arid heat.

I have already mentioned the frequency of butchers' shops in the market. The Nejdean breed of sheep is well known and much esteemed, even beyond the limits of Arabia. This is natural, for good and copious pasture, with a fairly temperate climate, render Nejed a land eminently adapted to the propagation and perfection of the species. However in the judgment of many, amongst whom I myself am one, they are inferior as an article of food to the sheep of Diar-Bekr and the frontiers of Curdistan. In the market of Damascus, whither they sometimes find their way, they fetch a high, but not the highest price. Their wool is remarkably fine, almost equalling that of Cachemire in softness and delicacy. I need hardly say that they are broad-tailed; all Arab sheep are so more or less. Were Arabia in the enjoyment of circumstances more favourable to commerce and what else accompanies it, half the Turkish empire might hence alone be supplied with wool and mutton; the proportion of pasture land in this country almost equalling the arable and the unreclaimable desert taken together. But the difficulty of exportation from the centre across the frontiers is naturally great, and has been rendered yet more so artificially, I mean by misgovernment or by careless indolence.

Camels abound; it is a "wilderness of camels." The breed here resembles in the main that of Shomer; but the colour, there most often between red and yellow, is in Nejed generally white or grey; black is rare everywhere. The stature, too, of the Nejdean camel is somewhat slimmer and smaller than the northern, and the hair is finer. They are cheaper in proportion than sheep; twenty-five to thirty shillings is an average camel-price; not much for so powerful an animal. Dromedaries begin to grow frequent; but of them more anon.

Oxen and kine are much more common in Nejed than in the northerly provinces; in Yemāmah they abound, and are not rare, as I was told, in Wadi Dowāsir. These beasts are generally small-limbed, but always furnished with the hump of

their Indian compeers, though less fortunate than they in attracting respect or adoration. The prevailing colour is dun. Buffaloes are unknown in Central Arabia.

Game, both small and great, feathered or quadruped, is plenty throughout all this district, but is seldom hunted. Partridges, quails, *Ḳaṭa* (a variety of the partridge kind), and pigeons, are to be met with everywhere; and I heard of, but did not see, the *Ḳalam*, a kind of bustard; I have myself seen and shot this bird in the neighbourhood of Rajcote. But small shot have never been introduced into Nejed; and to bring down a bird on the wing surpasses the skill of most Arab marksmen; besides, matchlocks and bullets are ill adapted to quail or partridge shooting. There are no ostriches in the uplands of *Toweyk*. Of gazelles, numerous here even more than elsewhere, I have spoken already, nor did I see or hear of any other variety of the deer species. Nor are gazelles much hunted, unless by some chance *Ṣolibah*. Wild boars and pigs are frequent in the mountain; needs hardly say that these animals are here of no greater use than ornament. Only their tusks are sometimes converted, but beyond the limits of *Wahhābee* lands, into queer snuff-boxes, and sometimes into pipes, a twofold abomination. But even a *Ṣolibah* would not touch the flesh of the unclean animal, little more in favour with Eastern Christians than with Mahometans themselves, except where Europeans have by their example accustomed a small number of individuals to consider it a lawful luxury.

My readers must certainly be desirous to learn something about the horse in Central Arabia; the more so that *Nejdean* horses are to Arab horses in general what Arab horses are to those of other countries. And besides, what Englishman would esteem worthy his perusal a work on Arabia which should not contain at least half-a-dozen pages on this subject? I am equally desirous of mounting with all speed what I confess to be my own hobby; but I must awhile moderate my reader's impatience and my own, and we will wait together till dawns the happy day when we may visit the royal *Ri'ad* stables, and at leisure survey the "*crème de la crème*" of the race; and then all who care shall have free admittance in my company.

And now from this incidental mention of horses, the noblest of the animal tribes, let us make an onward step to man, and



add a few words regarding the general character and the principal elements of the population of Ri'ad itself and of the surrounding districts. For fine buildings and gardens, wild animals or domestic, valleys and mountains, do not make a country; "el beled bi' ahlihi," "a land is to be estimated after its indwellers," says a trite Arab proverb; and the chief game to an enquiring mind, though in another sense than that of Nimrod, is man. Or, to borrow the not inelegant lines of an Eastern poet—lines which may recall to some readers one of Heinrich Heine's most perfect epigrams:—

I pass along by the dear dwelling, the dwelling of Leyla,  
And I bestow a kiss first on this wall and then on that ;  
Yet think not that the dwelling-place itself is the object of my love :  
The object of my love is She who inhabits the dwelling.

We will observe a due gradation in this important matter, and accordingly begin from the lowest in the human scale—its negro type.

Throughout Arabia we had frequently met with negroes—in Djowf, Shomer, Kaseem, and Sedeyr. But we had only met with them in the condition of slaves, and rarely in other than in the wealthier households, where these Africans were living, contented indeed and happy, fat and shining, but invariably under servitude, and in consequence entitled to no share in the political, or even in the civil, scheme of Arab society. Similar is their condition throughout Nejed itself so far as 'Aared. But here a change takes place; not only are negro slaves much more numerous than in the north, but even a distinct and free population of African origin comes into existence, along with its unfailing accompaniment of mulatto half-castes, till at last they form together a quarter, sometimes a third, of the sum total of inhabitants. Ri'ad abounds with them, Manfoohah and Selemee'yah yet more, while they swarm in the Hareek, Wadi Dowāsir, and their vicinity. This is the result of several causes: firstly, the nearness of the great slave-marts, whether on the eastern or on the western coast, like Djiddah in Hejāz, and the numerous seaports of 'Omān on the other side; nor is this a nearness of space only, but of connecting routes, intercourse, and commerce. Hence the first draught of slaves to Central Arabia, whether from the starting-



point of Mecca or from that of Hofhoof, passes directly through 'Aared, and many of them find a master here without going any farther. Alongside of this cause, and dependent on it, is the comparative cheapness of price: a negro here fetches from seven to ten pounds English in value; at Hā'yel or the Djowf it would be thirteen or fourteen. The climate also of Southern Nejed, which exhibits a certain similarity to the African, renders this part of Arabia more suited to negro habits and constitutions than are the high lands of Toweyk or Shomer, and thus contributes to their multiplication. Lastly, there exists in the indigenous population itself a certain bent of character inclining to sympathy with the dusky races; this originates in a fact of extensive historical and ethnological bearing, and meriting more elucidation than my present limits allow.

The number of negro slaves in these provinces gives rise to a second stage of existence for the black, common in the East, though not equally compatible with his condition in the far West. I mean that not of emancipation only, but of social equality also, with those around him—not by Act of Parliament or of Congress, but by individual will and public feeling. Nothing is more common for a Mahometan, but above all for an Arab, whether Mahometan or not, than to emancipate his slaves, sometimes during his own lifetime, on occasion of some good success of a religious obligation, of a special service rendered, nay often out of sheer good will, and sometimes on his death-bed, when he often strives to ensure a favourable reception in the next world by an act of generous humanity (at his heir's expense) done at the moment of quitting this. Another cause in operation is one readily imagined in a land where morals are lax, and legal restraint on this point yet laxer—I mean the universality of concubinage between the master and his female slave. In Nejed, at least, the boys sprung from this union are free-born, and so, I believe, are the girls, at least in the eye of the law.

These new possessors of civil liberty soon marry and are given in marriage. Now, although an emancipated negro or mulatto is not at once admitted to the higher circles of aristocratic life, nor would an Arab chief of rank readily make over his daughter to a black, yet they are by no means under the ban of incapacity and exclusion which weighs on them among races

of English blood. Accordingly, negroes can without any difficulty give their sons and daughters to the middle or lower class of Arab families, and thus arises a new generation of mixed race, here denominated "*Khodeyreeyah*" or "*Benoo-Khodeyr*," the which being interpreted means, "the Greens," or "the sons of the Green one." My readers must not, however, suppose that mulatto flesh in Arabia is so literally grass as to bear its actual hue. The colours green, black, and brown, are habitually confounded in common Arabic parlance, though the difference between them is, of course, well known and maintained in lexicons, or wherever accuracy of speech is aimed at. These "green ones," again, marry, multiply, and assume various tints, grass-green, emerald, opal, and the like; or, in exacter phrase, brown, copper-coloured, olive, and what Americans call, I believe, yellow. Like their progenitors, they do not readily take their place among the nobles or upper ten thousand, however they may end by doing even this in process of time; and I have myself while in Arabia been honoured by the intimacy of more than one handsome "Green-man," with a silver-hilted sword at his side, and a rich dress on his dusky skin, but denominated *Sheykh* or *Emeer*, and humbly sued by Arabs of the purest *Ismaelitic* or *Qaḥṭanic* pedigree. *Ri'ad* is full of these *Khodeyreeyah* shopkeepers, merchants, and officers of government; and I must add that their desire, common to all parvenus, of aping the high ton and ruling fashion, makes them at times the most bigoted and disagreeable *Wahhābees* in the city; a tendency which is the more fostered by hereditary narrowness of intellect.

Thus in Central *Nejed* society presents a new element pervading it from its highest to its lowest grades. Another peculiarity, not physical indeed, but moral, offers itself in the character of the indigenous population, taken apart from the embellishment or distortion caused by religious tenets. Not only as a *Wahhābee*, but equally as a *Nejdean*, does the native of 'Aareḍ, Aflāj, Yemāmah, Ḥareek, and Dowāsir, differ, and that widely, from his fellow-Arab of *Shomer* and *Qaseem*, nay, of *Woshem* and *Sedeyr*. The cause of this difference is much more ancient than the epoch of the great *Wahhābee*, and must be sought first and foremost in the pedigree itself. The descent claimed by the indigenous Arabs of this region is from the family

of Tameen, a name peculiar to these lands, but very familiar to Arab ears, and of frequent occurrence in prose and verse. Now Benoo-Tameem have been in all ages distinguished from other Arabs by strongly-drawn lines of character, the object of the exaggerated praise and of the biting satire of native poets. Good or bad, these characteristics, described some thousand years ago, are identical with the portrait of their real or pretended descendants. "Do you wonder at the men of 'Aareḍ?" said a man of Ḥaṣa in reply to my unfavourable comments on Ri'āḍ and its people; "surely you cannot have forgotten that they are Benoo-Tameem?" Much less spirited, less profusely generous, less prone to movement and hazardous enterprise, less cheerful and open too than the majority of Arab clans, they were known as more persevering, more united, more prudent; sparing of words, not easily roused nor quick to manifest their feelings, but firm of purpose, terrible in revenge, deep and implacable haters, and doubtful friends to all save their own immediate kindred. Their very expression of feature, reserved, often contracted, gloomy, or at best serious, contrasts strangely with the frank and pleasing faces of the northerly tribes, while it implies greater capacity for rule, organization, and, no less, oppression. Acting far more than any other Arabs on system, and less on impulse, of a narrower but a more concentrated frame of intellect and will, their union and perseverance are morally sure to triumph in the long run over their disunited and desultory neighbours, and the Nejdean empire necessarily tends to absorb or crush the greater part of the Peninsula, perhaps at no distant period. This same type stamps all their words and ways, even in house-life and in market dealings.

Along with this unamiable cast of mind and temper goes a greater simplicity in dress and in house ornament, the cutting-down of ringlets and the absence of ostentation in the use of wealth and goods. All this is simply natural to the men of 'Aareḍ and Yemāmah, independent of Wahnābee puritanism, and the rigour of its code. But even this double rigour, innate and legal, cannot always prevent their immense pride from finding vent in gorgeous trappings and costly furniture, when the consciousness of absolute and domineering strength affords security in so doing. Fortunately for them, the number of those who can safely enjoy such exceptional privileges is small; and

the common routine is one of moderation, approaching to austerity.

The Nejdean of these provinces is essentially agriculturist or shepherd. Woshem, indeed, and the north of Sedeyr, have something more of a commercial character, which in an Arab implies a love of travel and no reluctance to a temporary change of his native land for foreign scenes. But the men of Sedeyr from Toweym southwards, of 'Aareḍ, Yemāmah, Aflāj, and Dowāsir, are very rarely seen on trading business beyond the narrow circle of their own provinces. The commerce furnished by Ri'aḍ and the other great Nejdean centres of population is in its active part abandoned to foreigners. The born Nejdean (with exception of the natives of Ḥaræḵ) does indeed keep his storehouse, but will not go in quest of what to store it withal.

On the contrary, agriculture and gardening are much in vogue. Everyone owns his little plot of ground, whence he derives his own chief maintenance and that of his family; the monarch himself is not exempt from this law, for a considerable portion of the royal revenue is invested in plantations and fields. Nor are Nejdeans contemptible cultivators; the copious produce of their palm-trees, and of their corn or maize grounds, attests not perhaps theoretical but certainly practical skill. True, the plough is of very simple construction, but a light soil and a mild climate do not exact the hard stress and deep furrows which demand the more complicated instrument of the north. A rough hurdle answers all the purposes of an iron-toothed harrow, and a large shovel, often wooden, does the work of a spade. Irrigation is everywhere indispensable, no produce worthy of a husbandman can here thrive without it; and I have already said that a little more mechanical art might be advantageously bestowed on their pulleys and buckets. However, considering the number and the wants of the population—both comparatively less than they would be in most parts of Europe over an equal space and under parallel circumstances—what they have suffices them; and the Nejdean, if not active, is far from lazy.

Meanwhile another and a very different source of action and occupation has been opened, or at least enlarged and facilitated, by the present state of affairs. Nejdeans were ever prone to quarrel and war; their character, pourtrayed a few lines back,



implies no less; and the motto "thou shalt want ere I want" is not so peculiar to the highlands of Scotia that it might not have been with fully equal propriety blazoned on many an escutcheon in the highlands of Nejed. But so long as their feuds and forays, wars and plunder, were bounded by the ranges of Toweyk, there was little to gain or lose; the poor pillaged the poor, and the beggar, to permit ourselves a vulgar allusion, sued the beggar. But now, under the powerful dynasty of the Ebn-Sa'oods, the case has changed. War became henceforth methodical, and in consequence successful; better still, it is directed, not against their needy fellow-Nejdeans, but against the wealthy coast of Ḥaṣa, the traders and the pearl-fishers of 'Omān, or to bring home the spoils of Mecca and Medinah, of Meshid-Hoseyn and Zobeyr. War is a lottery, and a lottery has more attractions than the plough and the spade; but war attended by such circumstances, and presenting all the excitement of fanaticism, novelty, and rapacity, could not fail to engross the public mind, while it supplied the public wants. From the first campaigns of Sa'ood-ebn-Sa'ood down to our own time, every man of 'Aared and her sister provinces looks on the sword as a foremost means of private and household subsistence no less than of public revenue and state acquirement; and hence the whole current of Wahhābee being sets in a direction the very reverse of commerce, and not over favourable to agriculture.

But I had almost forgotten that all this time we are walking about the capital or strolling in its gardens; the noonday sun is hot, and probably my companions are tired, and would like to return home, there to make a quiet meal off our dates and onions, and wash it down with three cups of coffee, such as, alas! my reader is little likely to enjoy from Paris to Stamboul. We will now accordingly rest awhile, and after a short repose resume our interrupted tale, and amid the incidents of medical and professional life pourtray to the best of our abilities what yet remains for delineation of Ri'ad and of its inhabitants.

## CHAPTER IX

## LIFE AT RI'AD—THE WAHHĀBEE DYNASTY.

Turn we this globe, and let us see  
 How different nations disagree  
 In what we wear, or eat, or drink,  
 Nay, Dick, perhaps, in what we think.  
Prior

*Our First Patient Djowhar—His Position, Character, and Influence—  
 'Abd-el-Kereem—His History and Character—Visit to his House—An  
 'Aareḍ Dinner—Fumigation—His Family—Discussion on the Division  
 of Sins in Mahometan Theology—Polytheism and Tobacco Smoking—  
 Reasons alleged by 'Abd-el-Kereem—Qualities of Arab Tobacco—'Abd-  
 el-Kereem's Manœuvres to avoid Payment—His Sermon—'Abd-er-  
 Raḥmān the Meṭow'waa—His Rooms, Studies, and Pupils—Story of  
 Mahomet at Damascus—Indignation of 'Abd-el-Ḥameed—'Abd-el-  
 Lateef the Wahhābee—His History and Character—Anecdote of Divine  
 Judgment on Tobacco Smokers—Mohammed, Brother of 'Abd-el-Lateef  
 —Other Individuals—An Operation—Recovery of Djowhar—Our Posi-  
 tion at the Palace—Feyṣul's Old Age—His Family—Summary View of  
 the Provinces of his Empire—Their Dispositions—'Aaseer—Numerical  
 Census—Revenue—Census of the Kingdom of Shomer—Its Revenue.*

ACCORDING to promise, Aboo-'Eysa played his part to bring us in patients and customers, and the very second morning that dawned on us in our new house, ushered in an invalid who proved a very godsend. This was no other than Djowhar, treasurer of Feyṣul, and of the Wahhābee empire. My readers may be startled to learn that this great functionary was jet-black, a negro, in fact, though not a slave, having obtained his freedom from Turkee, the father of the present king. He was tall, and, for a negro, handsome, about forty-five years of age, splendidly dressed, a point never neglected by wealthy Africans, whatever be their theoretical creed, and girt with a golden-

hilted sword. But, said he, gold, though unlawful if forming a part of apparel or mere ornament, may be employed with a safe conscience in decorating weapons. Many preachers have, I believe, wasted time and eloquence in attempting to persuade the ladies to moderation in dress. I would gladly consent to see them try their chance with a congregation of upper-class negroes; what might be the result I know not, but certainly Gabriel and the Wahhābee have both made a complete failure in this respect. In all other points Djowhar was an excellent fellow, good-humoured, rather hot-tempered, but tractable and confiding, like most "people of his skin," in Arab phrase.

The disease he was actually suffering under annoyed him much, especially as Feyṣul desired to send him without delay on a government errand to Baḥreyn (where we afterwards met him), a business which his bad state of health rendered him wholly unfit for. Thus, bettering his condition might be almost looked on as a national service. Aboo-'Eysa, an old acquaintance and friend of the chief treasurer's, introduced him, and placed him in great dignity on a carpet spread in the courtyard, where, with two or three other individuals of wealth and importance, he seated himself beside the patient, and launched out into an eulogium of my medical skill which would have required some qualification if applied to Cullen himself; but it served wonderfully to encourage Djowhar, and thus predispose him for a cure.

After ceremonies and coffee, I took my dusky patient into the consulting room, where by dint of questioning and surnise, for negroes in general are much less clear and less to the point than Arabs in their statements, I obtained the requisite elucidation of his case. The malady, though painful, was fortunately one admitting of simple and efficacious treatment, so that I was able on the spot to promise him a sensible amēndment of condition within a fortnight, and that in three weeks' time he should be in plight to undertake his journey to Baḥreyn. I added that with so distinguished a personage I could not think of exacting a bargain and fixing the amount of fees; the requital of my care should be left to his generosity. He then took leave, and was re-conducted to his rooms in the palace by his fellow-blacks of less degree.

The next individual worthy of note whom we took in hand

was of a very different stamp from Djowhar ; less pliable, less grateful, but in some respects even more to the purpose of our sojourn in Ri'ad. This was 'Abd-el-Kereem, son of Ibraheem, nearly allied by marriage with the great Wahnābee family, and claiming descent from the oldest nobility of 'Aared. Himself a bitter Wahnābee, and a model of all the orthodox vices of his sect, he had figured conspicuously in the first band of Zelators at the epoch of their foundation in 1855, and the cruel death of Soweylim, the late minister, was by popular rumour ascribed to this man's personal jealousy and private aims, thinly disguised under the mask of religious zeal. Other acts of the same description were attributed to him, and he had during a brief exercise of power become so universally unpopular, that his fellow-Zelators had been compelled to avail themselves of the pretext of his weak health to remove him from office. Honoured by those who considered him a victim of his own virtues, hated by ordinary mortals, he now led a retired life in the third quarter of the town, whence a chronic bronchitis, no uncommon ailment in this climate, brought him to our door.

He presented himself with an air of cheerful modesty, and before stating his case entered, by way of introduction, into a discourse which proved him a master of Islamitic lore. Under our roof he affected a special tenderness for the Damascene school of doctrine, took care to remind us that the son of 'Abd-el-Wahnāb had learned the true faith in the capital of Syria, and insinuated that we ourselves were doubtless of equal orthodoxy and learning. It was a pleasure to converse with him on topics in which he was thoroughly at home, and a few encomiums soon led him to instruct us on many points of Wahnābee doctrine and manners. At last, from abstract, he descended to practical regions, and begged me to examine his chest. I prescribed what seemed requisite, and he took his leave, but not till after exacting a promise of our honouring his house with our presence at an early dinner next day. All this familiarity pleased yet alarmed Aboo-'Eysa. Pleased, because admittance to the domestic circle of so high a character in the orthodox world was, in common phrase, a feather in our cap, and a ticket of respectability elsewhere ; and alarmed when he considered the treacherous and evil heart of our future host. Indeed, this latter feeling so far predominated, that he advised us not to



stand to our engagement ; but I did not think fit to comply with this over-cautious admonition.

Next day, a little before noon, 'Abd-el-Kereem, in a long white robe, modest guise, and staff in hand, came to our abode in person, and claimed the fulfilment of our promise. We rose and accompanied him across the market-place and behind the palace, through neat streets where decorum and gravity were manifestly the order of the day, till we reached his dwelling. It was a large one ; he ushered us into the courtyard, and thence up a long flight of steps to the second storey, where we entered a handsome and well-lighted divan. Above its door was inscribed, in the large half-Cufic characters usual throughout Nejed, and, like all Nejdean inscriptions, simply painted not carved, the distich of the celebrated poet, 'Omar-ebn-el-Farid :—

Welcome to him of whose approach I am all unworthy,  
Welcome to the voice announcing joy after lonely melancholy :  
Good tidings thine ; off with the robes of sadness ; for know  
Thou art accepted, and I myself will take on me whatever grieves thee.

Within the room sat Ibraheem, the aged father of our friend and master of the house, and with him another of his sons ; several books treating of law and divinity, sections of the Coran, and inkstands, with good supply of writing paper ; some of these objects strewed on the divan, others inserted in the little triangular niches which represent bookcases in Arabia, announced a haunt of learning and study.

Capital towns suppose more polished manners and greater elegance of life than elsewhere, nor does Wahhābee severity prevent Ri'ad from following the general rule. A very courteous greeting and honourable reception was made us by Ibraheem and his family, and one of the children brought in without delay a select dish of excellent dates, as a gage of good will and esteem. When in due time the dinner made its appearance, after many excuses for its simplicity :—"You Damascenes would treat us better were we your guests, but Nejed is poor, the means want us, not the will," and the like—it included, among other delicacies, a dish which I was equally surprised and pleased to see, because it was a clear indication of our approach to the eastern coast. But were my readers, even though of East Norfolk, to guess for an hour together what was this well-omened platter, they would hardly, I think, hit on

dried shrimps, the article now before us. My Syrian companion did not know what to make of them; for me, I welcomed old friends, though under disadvantageous circumstances—less fresh and less correctly prepared than they might have been on the bonny banks of Yare. On enquiry, I was informed that these delicacies formed a regular item of importation from Haşa, and that the fishery itself belonged to Baḥreyn. But of the copious marine produce of that island nothing else arrives thus far; possibly from want of skill in salting and curing.

After dinner we washed our hands with potash or kalee (whence our own “alkali”), the ordinary cleanser of Nejed, and then took place the ceremony of fumigation. Not that we here underwent it for the first time, since even in Djebel Shomer it is sometimes practised, and in Sedeyr is of daily occurrence; but I forgot to describe it before, and this may be a suitable occasion. Indeed, here, in orthodox 'Aared, perfuming has scarcely less of a religious than of a genteel character, the Prophet having declared himself in express terms almost as much a lover of sweet odours as of women, wherein he left an example to be imitated by zealous followers. Accordingly after meals, or even at the conclusion of a simple coffee-drinking visit, appears a small square box, with the upper part of its sides pierced filigree-wise, while its base offers a sort of stalk or handle, long enough to lay hold of without danger of burning one's fingers; the apparatus is of baked clay, and looks much like an overgrown four-petaled flower. Above, it is filled with charcoal or live embers of Ithel, and on these are laid three or four small bits of sweet-scented wood, identical with that which in the last chapter bribed the ministry on our behalf; or, in place of wood, fragments of benzoin incense, till the rich clammy smoke goes up as from a censer. Everyone now takes in turn the burning vase, passes it under his beard (which, I may remark, is generally but a scraggy one in Nejed), next lifts up one after another the corners of his head-gear or kerchief, to catch therein an abiding perfume, though at the risk of burning his ears if he be a new hand at the business, like myself; and lastly, though not always, opens the breast of his shirt too, to give his inner man a whiff of sweet-smelling remembrance. For the odour is extremely tenacious, and may be perceived for hours after. Twice or thrice only did I see incense of the kind commonly employed in Europe brought

in on these occasions ; imported, they said, from Ḥadramaut. But to return to our host.

His father, old Ibraheem, could remember the Egyptian invasion and the siege of *Ḍerey'eeyah*. He told us many tales regarding those events, of which he had been an eye-witness ; and the name of *Aboo-Nokta* was not unknown to our narrator, but he assigned much greater military prominence to another negro champion, entitled *Ḥārith*, the hero, in *Nejdean* annals at least, of a single combat, Homeric fashion, with Ibraheem Basha himself. When the old man was on these topics, he kindled up, and looked as though he could swallow all the infidels on earth alive, nor do I suppose that he was in reality scant of courage ; cowardice is no fault of *Nejdeans*.

'Abd-el-Kereem continued to pay us almost daily visits, and we occasionally to return them, till his ailment was sufficiently relieved, and he had no further need of us. He was not, I think, "clear," to borrow a Quaker phrase, touching our orthodoxy, and loved discussion ; but if ready to question, he was no less ready to expound and answer.

During an intimate conversation, I enquired of him one day, what, according to the *Wahhābee* code, were the great sins, or "*Kebēy'ir-eḍ-ḍenoob*," in Arab terms, and what the little ones, or "*Ṣeghey'ir*." My readers may perhaps know that Mahometans divide sins into classes—the "great," to be punished in the next world, or at least deserving it ; and the "little" sins, whose forgiveness is more easily obtained, and whose penalty is remissible in this life.

The fact of a real and important distinction is admitted, somewhat analogous to the division widely received among Christians between mortal and venial transgressions. But here comes a main difficulty, namely, which is which ? Every one knows the infinite variety of opinion existing on this subject among Christian doctors or casuists. Nor are Mahometan divines less at variance. Some hold infidelity, polytheism, or non-Mahometanism, to be the only mortal sin—want of faith, in short. This seems to have been Mahomet's own decision, and is countenanced by several texts of the *Coran*. Others insisting on certain expressions contained in the "*Book*," add wilful homicide and usury ; others again run the total number up to seven, perhaps in imitation of the seven deadly sins specified among Christians ; others carry it on to fifty, to seventy ; and in a

learned manuscript perused by myself in the town of Ḥamah, I was alarmed to find no less than four hundred entitled to this "bad eminence."

Knowing this variety of opinion among ordinary Mahometans regarding the bipartition of sins, I was desirous to learn where Wahnābees thought fit to draw the contested line. My readers cannot fail to understand that the answer to this query must throw considerable light on the moral character of the sect; the most important point, perhaps, where national creeds are concerned. Accordingly, I expressed to my learned friend the great anxiety which I lay under, and how uneasy my conscience was, from the fear of committing "great" sins, while deeming them only "little" ones; that I had found the doctors of the north diffident and unsatisfactory in their replies; but that now, in the most pious and orthodox of towns, and in the society of the most learned of friends (modestly looking towards him), I hoped to set my mind at rest, and settle once for all a matter of such high importance.

'Abd-el-Kereem doubted not that he had a sincere scholar before him, nor would refuse his hand to a drowning man. So, putting on a profound air, and with a voice of first-class solemnity, he uttered his oracle, that "the first of the great sins is the giving divine honours to a creature." A hit, I may observe, at ordinary Mahometans, whose whole doctrine of intercession, whether vested in Mahomet or in 'Alee, is classed by Wahnābees along with direct and downright idolatry. A Damascene Sheykh would have avoided the equivocation by answering, "infidelity."

"Of course," I replied, "the enormity of such a sin is beyond all doubt. But if this be the first, there must be a second; what is it?"

"Drinking the shameful," in English, "smoking tobacco," was the unhesitating answer.

"And murder, and adultery, and false witness?" I suggested.

"God is merciful and forgiving," rejoined my friend; that is, these are merely little sins.

"Hence two sins alone are great, polytheism and smoking," I continued, though hardly able to keep countenance any longer. And 'Abd-el-Kereem with the most serious asseveration replied that such was really the case. On hearing this, I proceeded humbly to entreat my friend to explain to me the especial



wickedness inherent in tobacco leaves, that I might the more detest and eschew them hereafter.

Accordingly he proceeded to instruct me, saying that, Firstly, all intoxicating substances are prohibited by the Coran; but tobacco is an intoxicating substance; Ergo, tobacco is prohibited.

I insinuated that it was not intoxicating, and appealed to experience. But, to my surprise, my friend had experience too on his side, and had ready at hand the most appalling tales of men falling down dead drunk after a single whiff of smoke, and of others in a state of bestial and habitual ebriety from its use. Nor were his stories so purely gratuitous as many might at first imagine. The only tobacco known, when known, in Southern Nejed, is that of 'Omān, a very powerful species. I was myself astonished, and almost "taken in," more than once, by its extraordinary narcotic effects, when I experienced them, in the coffee-houses of Bahreyn and the K'hāwahs of Ṣoḥar.

However, I would not subscribe to his argument; besides, I had not yet tried the sort of tobacco which he had in mind. So I rejoined that, without questioning in the least the accuracy of the facts he stated, they were after all to be looked on as exceptions, or unfortunate idiosyncrasies; and that, in a general way, the depraved wretches whom we Damascenes, in the less enlightened regions of the north, daily saw with deep regret indulging in the use of the "shameful," did not exhibit any notable symptoms of ebriety, or incur such tragic catastrophes, at least in their outward man.

But my preceptor turned the tables on me by boldly asserting intoxication to be the rule and non-intoxication the exception. "Just so," added he, "some men will drink wine without being sensibly affected by it, yet their example nohow exempts the liquor from the absolute prohibition, founded on its natural and ordinary effect." Where to I thought it wisest to make no reply, for fear of a too comprehensive major in my syllogism, which might have brought me under suspicion of advocating wine also, and so made bad worse.

Still 'Abd-el-Kereem, like most sophists, felt inwardly that his first reason was not entirely conclusive, and now brought forward a second, founded on tradition. That authority teaches us that Mahomet, why or when I do not remember, declared

to his followers the unlawfulness of employing in food whatever had been burnt or singed with fire. Perhaps this is one reason for the universality of boiled meat in Nejed, to the total exclusion of roasted, grilled, or fried, unless ignorance of cookery be the only practical cause. Any way, there stands the prohibition, and it only remained to show that tobacco smoke was included in it. The Arab equivocation between "drinking" and "smoking"—for the word "shārebā" is applied to either—sufficed for this.

To this argument I opposed the use of fumigations, so common in Nejed, and so dear to the Prophet. But in vain, for the word "shārebā" was inapplicable here. Whereon I sought refuge in the "Mellah," or bread, baked or rather burnt, under the glowing cinders, of which comestible a former stage of our narrative has afforded frequent example, and which is equally in use throughout Nejed. This was really to the point; and 'Abd-el-Kereem fell back on the intoxicating properties of the herb.

Such was the upshot of my conversation that day with 'Abd-el-Kereem; I give it by way of a specimen of many others held at different times. The sinfulness of tobacco was, indeed, a frequent topic in Nejed, and it was confirmed by visible and appalling judgments. Thus, for example: A man, supposed of correct life and unquestionable Islam, died and was buried at Sedoos, the same little frontier town which we passed not long since. Prayers were said over him, and he was duly laid in his grave, reclining on his side, his face toward the Ca'abah, like any other good Muslim. Now it chanced that a neighbour, while assisting at the funeral ceremonies, had let fall, unperceived by himself, a small purse of money exactly into the pit, where it remained covered up with earth alongside the dead man. On returning home, the owner of the purse discovered his loss; he searched everywhere, but to no purpose, and at last rightly concluded that his money must have found an untimely grave. What was to be done? To disturb the repose of the dead is an action no less abhorred among Mahometans than among ordinary Christians. But *quid non mortalia pectora cogis, Auri sacra fames?* The peasant consulted the village Kadee, who assured him that in such a case digging up a corpse was no crime, though he wisely advised him to await nightfall, for fear

of scandal and gossip. Night at last came, and the excusable "resurrection man" set to work, and soon released his purse from the cold grasp of death. But what was his amazement and horror to see his deceased townsman now laid with his face turned away from the Ca'abah, and shifted to a position exactly the opposite of that in which they had but lately placed him. Hastily covering up the grave, he returned to give the Kāḍee information of the portent. Both agreed that the defunct, to merit this ominous transposition, must have died in infidelity or some equally grievous sin, and an official search of his quondam domicile was set on foot, to discover the traces or indications of his wicked ways. High and low they ransacked, and at last detected, where it had been carefully hidden in a crevice of the wall, a small bone pipe, whose blackened tube and diabolical smell too plainly denoted its frequent use, and revealed the infamous hypocrisy of its owner. The crime was evident, the visible chastisement explained, and no doubt but that the amateur of "shameful" smoke had already gone to unquenchable fire—"sarve him right"! Another had rotted piecemeal, a rock had fallen on the head of a third, &c. Bigotry and its tales are the same under every climate, and in every tongue *mutato nomine—fabula narratur*.

I return to 'Abd-el-Kereem, and what passed between us on occasion of his entire recovery, an event in which my readers, I hope, take a charitable interest; it was pre-eminently significant alike of the man and of the people. In about three weeks' space the symptoms which had previously annoyed him had so far disappeared, that he felt and declared himself perfectly well. At the outset of the treatment we had fixed the fee to be paid on cure, and now that the time came, I gently reminded him of his engagement. The first hint having not taken effect, a second and a third followed, each broader than its predecessor, but all to no purpose. Meanwhile several of the most respectable inhabitants, for we had by this taken our place among the citizens, joined in urging the ex-Zelator to the acquittance of the stipulation. And since the whole sum in question did not exceed eleven shillings English, 'Abd-el-Kereem's backwardness was no less ridiculous than shabby. Ashamed, yet reluctant, he bethought himself of an expedient for getting off, ingenious, but hardly creditable.

I was seated alone in my K'hāwah, somewhat late in the afternoon, when a brisk knock at the door warned me to stop my note-writing and to undo the latch. In came three or four of my town friends, with the merry faces of men who have a good jest to tell, and had hardly seated themselves before they began to relate what they had just witnessed. They had arrived from the daily afternoon sermon at the Great Mosque or Djāmia'. While yet at Hā'yel I mentioned this kind of discourse; here there is no essential difference, unless that the ceremony is much longer, the audience more numerous, and the lecture or sermon turns twice out of three times on some peculiarity of the sect. On the present occasion, when the reader, a Meṭow'-waa', had finished his part, 'Abd-el-Kereem came forward to deliver the vivâ voce commentary, here never omitted. Our friend took for theme of his discourse, the inefficacy of created means, and the obligation of placing one's confidence in the Creator alone, to the exclusion of the creature. Thence coming to a practical application, he inveighed against those who put their trust in physic and physicians, not in God solely, and declared such trust to be; firstly, heretical, and, secondly, a sheer mistake, inasmuch as the only effective cause of health or sickness, life or death, is simply the Divine will; doctors and medicine being for nothing in the matter from beginning to end. Whence he deduced a second and a very legitimate consequence, that such useless things and beings could nohow merit any recompense either in money or in thanks from a true believer. Nay, added he, should even a sick man really seem to be bettered by medical means, and while employing them recover his health, such a recovery would be a mere coincidence, no matter of cause and effect, and the doctor would in consequence be entitled to absolutely nothing, since the cure was due not to him, but to the Deity alone, La Ilāh illa Allāh, &c.

Probably, at another moment and from another mouth, these lessons of theologico-practical wisdom would have passed without other comment than silence or approbation. But unluckily 'Abd-el-Kereem was a conspicuous character, and so was I. Every neighbour knew the whole history of his ailment, his physicking, and his cure, by heart. The result was, that his holding forth, although perfectly orthodox in itself, lay under the imputation of private nor over-honourable feelings, and



everyone suspected the preacher to be engaged rather in knotting his own purse-strings than in untying the plexus of a doctrinal question. Winks and nods went round; and, when the auditors were once out of the mosque, followed comments and what laughter might be compatible with Nejdean decorum. My friends enjoyed the joke heartily, and in conclusion promised to bring 'Abd-el-Kereem by one means or another to our house next day, while we agreed together on what should then be said and done.

They kept promise, and in the following forenoon 'Abd-el-Kereem appeared with an embarrassed look, and surrounded by several companions, amongst whom were those of the preceding evening. After the preliminaries of courtesy, and conversation having reached the desired point, "'Abd-el-Kereem," said I, "there can be no doubt that health and recovery come from God alone, and small thanks to the doctor. In the same manner, neither more nor less, I expect that God will give me so much" (naming the stipulated sum) "by your instrumentality, and when I have got it, small thanks to you also." Every one laughed, and fell on our poor ex-Zelator, till he became thoroughly ashamed of himself. He left the house with promise of speedy payment, and before sunset his younger brother had brought the money in question, thus preventing further sarcasms. But 'Abd-el-Kereem never crossed our threshold again.

I had a much more favourable specimen of the learned or semi-learned class in a third patient of note, 'Abd-er-Rahmān, the Meṭow'waa' or chaplain of the palace. For years past he had been subject to attacks of severe nervous headache, and he was actually labouring under a paroxysm which confined him to his room, and rendered him incapable of performing his clerical functions. Djowhar, who already felt and acknowledged an amelioration in his health, had by this time established the good reputation of his doctor in the palace; and at his suggestion the Meṭow'waa' sent for me, with a message of uncommon urgency.

His apartments, directly opposite to those of Maḥboob, were spacious and well-furnished, and contained, among other articles, about forty volumes, printed or manuscript, on various subjects; a very fair library for Arabia. In spite of pain, he mustered up

all the elegant pedantry of grammar in the exposure of his case ; and when, after two or three days, a proper treatment had relieved him of his tortures, he proved a very interesting acquaintance, infinitely more amiable and open than 'Abd-el-Kereem. In his rooms I learnt much of the history of Moseylemah, of the Wahhābee, of the religious state of Nejed in old times, and many similar topics. Hither, as to a common centre, resorted many of the young students in law and divinity already alluded to, and would discuss before me moral questions or points of dogma after their fashion, for 'Abd-er-Rahmān was not only learned, but agreeably communicative, and a good speaker, and drew these pale thin lads around him, till most regarded him as their guide and master.

One morning I was seated on the "Belaş," or coarse-spun Nejdean carpet, by his side, and many of the palace were present in mixed conversation. Somehow the discourse fell on Damascus, or "Shām," whereon all, in politeness bound, began to praise what they fancied to be my native city, and to cite that well-known tradition of Mahomet's visit to that city. A mere fable, according to which the Prophet, on whom be salutation and blessings, had purposed entering the Syrian capital, and had already half-alighted from his camel near the southern gate ; when just as one of his blessed feet reached the ground, and the other was about to follow it, lo ! Gabriel the archangel by his side, to inform him that God left him his choice between the Paradise of this world and that of the next ; and that consequently if he persisted in entering Damascus, it must be on condition of renouncing the gardens and houris of heaven. Whereon the Prophet very properly changed his design, preferred the enjoyments of eternity to the groves and waters of Barada, replaced his leg over his saddle, and returned by the way he came. However, to the confusion of all sceptics and infidels, the print of the prophetic foot which had already touched the rocky soil, remained ineffaceably imprinted there, and I myself have had the happiness of seeing it in the pretty little mosque commemorative of the vision and the choice, near the town-gate on the road from Hauran. Though indeed some contend that the five-toed mark belongs not to Mahomet but to Gabriel, who, in human form, but with angelic agility, alighted on one foot only. Far be it from me to attempt

deciding so weighty a controversy; my readers may settle it for themselves.

Whosoever the footprint may be, the story is gospel among Mahometans, and it was now recited for the thousandth time, in compliment to us, the supposed "Showām," or Damascenes. But 'Abd-el-Ḥameed, the Peshawuree, already described, was present, and could not bear this in silence. Besides the jealous ill will that he bore us, and which alone might have sufficed to move his choler, he was himself a native of the fair regions of Cachemire, and brought up amid groves far lovelier than the gardens of Damascus, and by the side of rivers to which the Barada were a mere gutter. Lastly, he was a true Shiya'ee at heart, and the praises of the most Sonnee of all cities, the old capital of Beni-Ommeyah, and the centre even now of hostility and antagonism to his sect, were gall and wormwood to his soul. So "fierce he broke forth": "What nonsense you here are talking. Paradise of the earth! Paradise of the earth! and all for a few stunted trees and a little muddy water! Why! do you not understand that the Prophet and his companions were nothing but Bedouins, accustomed all their life to the arid sterilities of Ḥejāz, and the desert? so when at Damascus they came for the first time on a cluster of gardens and running streams, they straightway concluded this to be Paradise, and so named it! Guess, had they seen my country they would have changed their mind."

All eyes stared, all jaws dropped, and "Astaghfir Ullah," (I beg pardon of God,) and "La Ilāh illa Allāh" went largely round, while 'Abd-el-Ḥameed, now red-hot with excitement, and worked up into recklessness of results, glared anger and scorn, and muttered Cabul curses. Had he not been a personal favourite of Feyṣul's, matters might have gone ill for him. But 'Abd-er-Raḥmān prudently hastened to turn the conversation, and this outbreak of Affghan vehemence passed without further comment.

Needs not weary my non-medical readers with a detail of cases, here more numerous and luckily more successful than elsewhere. Some of my patients were townsmen, others strangers on business in Ri'āḍ; some were rich, some poor; many visits and meals were given and returned. Thus, at times we found ourselves cushion-reclined in a well-carpeted

Ḳ'hāwah, before an ostentatious pile of coffee-pots, two for use and ten for show; at others in the low, ill-lighted rooms on the ground floor, the dwellings of the poor; sometimes in a garden a mile or more out of town, on a call of friendship or duty. The days passed rapidly; and I am much mistaken if some London practitioners would not have envied us our want of leisure, and a popularity which they would better have deserved.

However, I cannot leave in silence 'Abd-el-Lateef, the great-grandson of the famed Wakhābee, and now Ḳaḍee of the capital—a very, indeed remarkably handsome and fair-spoken man, and bearing in his manners a sensible dash of Egyptian civilization. While yet a mere child he was carried to Egypt with the rest of his family by the conquering Basha, and there educated. Cairo society, and the intercourse of men more learned and less exclusive than those of Nejed and Derey-eeyah, have taught him an ease and variety of conversation surprising in a Ḳaḍee of Ri'ad; and thus enabled him to assume on occasion a liberality of phrase free from the cant terms and wearisome tautology of the sect which he heads. But such liberal semblance is merely a surface whitewash; the tongue may be the tongue of Egypt, but the heart and brain are ever those of Nejed. Nor do I believe that the central mountains of Arabia contain a more dangerous man than 'Abd-el-Lateef, or one who more cordially hates the progress he has witnessed, and in which he has to a certain degree participated. It is the embodied antipathy of bad to good, at least equal to that of good to bad.

We were not unfrequently together, though the knowledge of whom I had to deal with made me rather hold back, in spite of his great courtesies. That his house was a palace, his gardens of the widest, his slaves a throng, need hardly be said; next after the king, he was unquestionably the first personage in the capital, and even in the empire; nay, in many respects, he was more powerful than Feysul himself. I was again and again his guest to a cup of coffee: from I know not what intonation of my voice, he believed me not a Damascene but an Egyptian, and conversed willingly about the Ḳaṣr-el-Eynee and the Djāmia'-el-Azhar. But he also knew me to be a Christian, and in due time showed what were his real feelings towards me as such.



I was often present at his public lectures and comments, whether delivered in his own elegant mosque, close by his house in the third quarter of the town, or in the great Djāmīa' of the city. On these occasions he was surrounded by numerous and earnest auditors, besides a select body of especial disciples; and I must give him the deserved credit of being a clear and elegant speaker, possessed also of the range of learning suitable to his position.

'Abd-el-Lateef is not the only representative of his family; he is the eldest of several brothers, but all notably inferior to him in talent. The youngest among them, Moḥammed, was a very original character. He had just returned from Egypt, where he had figured for two years among the medical students of the Kaṣr-el-'Eynē, and exemplified in his person the Arab proverb, "went a donkey and came back a jackass." Narrow-minded, narrow-hearted, as avaricious at twenty as ever Sir John Cutler at sixty, with the exotic vices of Cairo engrafted on the indigenous stock of Ri'ād, and a dialect confused like his who in his travels "lost his own language, and acquired no more," it was most amusing to hear his Egyptian experiences, and his comments on the race of Pharaoh, as he impolitely styled the inhabitants of the great Delta. He had followed the preliminary lectures of the medical college, but little understood them; at last, time came to attend the anatomical course, and witness the mysteries of the "dead room," when, said he, his orthodoxy could not stomach practices so contrary to correct Islam, and he had abandoned college and capital in disgust. So ran his version of the matter; I much suspect that hopeless stupidity, perhaps ill-conduct, held the larger part with an expulsion veiled under the more respectable title of retirement. He was in truth one of the most thorough brutes I ever had the bad fortune to meet; and I was honoured by his especial hatred, and peculiar calumnies.

Were I not deterred by the fear of abusing my reader's patience, I might add some account of the Bedouin chief Toweel, of the 'Oṭeybah clan, whom I counted among my patients, and who, Bedouin-like, availed himself of returning health to run away from Ri'ād without settling his bill; of the wealthy Abd-er-Rizzaḳ, and his handsome dwelling in the genuine style of an old Nejdean chief; of the good-humoured Abyssinian Fahd,

whose sprightly off-hand manner contradistinguished him from his Arabian neighbours ; of the young Hamood, wounded in 'Oneyzah warfare, and thus half a martyr, with many other patients and friends who enlivened our stay, while they filled now our note-book and now our purse.

None, however, proved a more grateful or a more liberal convalescent than our old acquaintance, the chief treasurer, Djowhar. With negro docility, he forgot his high position so far as to come and seek treatment morning and evening at our modest domicile, though movement was in his case accompanied by much pain. At the end of three weeks his cure was far advanced, and he could without serious inconvenience undertake his journey to the coast. His joy was unbounded, and a present handsome for Nejed—it amounted to about forty shillings of our own money—with abundance of hearty encomiums, testified his gratitude. Our position at court was now excellent, and 'Abd-Allah himself, the heir-apparent, and the active administrator of the kingdom, was decidedly in our favour. But Maḥboob, the prime minister, had hitherto looked coldly on us ; and it was to his father's recovery that we at last owed his patronage, and, for a certain period of time, his intimacy. Our visits at the palace became more and more frequent, and we could talk of sultans of Nejed, princes and ministers, "as maids of thirteen do of puppy-dogs."

Feyṣul, the sultan of the land, has already figured in this narrative, sufficiently to dispense with further details of his history and person. Suffice to say that as age has advanced, Feyṣul has become stone blind, while increasing corpulence, a rare phenomenon in Arab physiology, has rendered him more and more incapable of active exertion. Timidity also, and superstition its frequent follower, grows on him daily, till for the last three or four years he has almost wholly resigned the direction of affairs to his son 'Abd-Allah, dividing what time yet remains to him between the oratory and the ḥarem. He never appears in public, except for an early visit every Friday morning to his father's tomb, or when some extraordinary event induces him to show himself to the populace for a few minutes and no more. Without the palace walls 'Abd-Allah governs supreme, while within Maḥboob and some negro slaves, privileged in their access to the person of the old despot, lead

him at their will. The only other human beings freely admitted to his presence are the bigoted Zelators, whose moral and even material influence he is unable to withstand, nor dares reject whatever they may impose on him, however injurious to the better interests of the empire. Avarice, "that good old-gentlemanly vice," has claimed over Feyṣul the dominion which she too often extends over better men at a similar period of their existence, while dissimulation and treachery have been perfected by long practice into a second nature. In short, it may be feared that what good was in him has almost if not totally vanished, while heart and head, intellect and will, are alike sinking into a dotage well befitting a tyrant of seventy.

Of 'Abd-Allah his eldest son the past sketch may suffice. It is, however, worth adding that his mother belongs to the Sa'ood family. Not so the mother of the second son, named after the first founder of the race Sa'ood, but born from a woman of the Benoo-Khālid clan, and verifying a known Arab saying, by presenting much more of the maternal than of the paternal resemblance. For whereas 'Abd-Allah is, like his father, short, stout, large-headed and thick-necked, a very bull in appearance, Sa'ood is tall, slender, handsome, and with a strong trace of the careless Bedouin expression in his countenance. Open and generous, fond of show and horsemanship, he is a great favourite with the "liberal" party, who entitle him "Aboo-'hala," literally, "father of welcome," from the "Ya-'hala," or "welcome" with which he is wont to greet whoever approaches him. Whereas 'Abd-Allah stands forth the head of the orthodox party, who look up to him as their main support and future hope.

Of course the two brothers, almost equal in age, are at daggers drawn, and cannot even speak peaceably to each other. Feyṣul, to prevent frequent collision, has appointed Sa'ood regent of Yemāmah and Ḥareek, with Salemee'yah for chief residence, thus putting him at a distance from Ri'ad, where 'Abd-Allah resides in quality of special governor over the town. Meantime Sa'ood, by his easy access and liberal conduct, has won the hearts of his immediate subjects, and of all opposed to rigorism in the other provinces. Hence it is universally believed that the death of Feyṣul will prove the signal for a bloody and equally matched war between the Romulus and Remus, or, if you will, between the Don Henry and Don Pedro, of Nejed.

So far as two despots and two evils admit of a choice, my own good wishes go with Sa'ood. Feysul, however, from orthodoxy and perhaps sympathy, favours the elder brother, and tries to keep the second in the background. Once only, on occasion of some troubles in Wadi Dowāsir, he appointed Sa'ood leader of the armament about to be sent thither. But he soon repented him of having thus given him an opportunity for public display, when Sa'ood, after a brief but brilliant campaign, reappeared at Ri'aḍ accompanied by two hundred picked men, all richly dressed in handsome scarlet uniform, with gold broidery, silvered swords, costly housings, and "each man mounted on his capering beast," in a splendour unknown even to the days of the first 'Abd-Allah, and equally offensive to paternal bigotry and fraternal jealousy. Sa'ood was ordered back with speed to Salemee'yah, whence, however, we shall soon see him return, and I will then duly relate what passed on the meeting of the family trio—Sa'ood, 'Abd-Allah, and Feysul.

A third son, Moḥammed, offspring of a Nejdean dame, and much resembling his father and eldest brother in appearance, was now at the siege of 'Oneyzah, where we left him a few chapters back. The fourth and last, 'Abd-er-Raḥmān, is a heavy-looking boy, who as yet inhabits his father's harem. He appeared to me between ten and twelve years old: a Lavater would not gather from his features much promise for the future. I have mentioned the old maid, Feysul's only unmarried daughter and private secretary. She is, I trust, very beautiful, but I have never been blest with a peep behind the black veil wherein she sits muffled up, looking more like a heap of clothes than a king's daughter. And thus much for the royal family of Nejed.

But before we return to our narrative and relate what passed between us and them, it may not be amiss to take a brief view of the actual condition of this empire, which presents two elements, very diverse and often sharply opposed to each other: the first consists of the real staunch Wahhābees, men who, in the words of old Oliver, "bring a conscience to their work;" the second, of those who are only Wahhābees by subjection, and because they cannot help it. German idiom might class them into Wahhābees and "muss," or "*must-be*-Wahhābees."

The former class predominates in the six provinces, 'Aareḍ, Woshem, Sedeyr, Aflāj, Dowāsir, and Yemāmah. Not that



disaffected individuals are here wholly wanting, but they form a decided minority, composed mainly of old chieftain families dispossessed by the present government, and of their immediate retainers. The rest of the inhabitants are all sincerely attached to the Sa'ood dynasty and system, though the reason and degree of their attachment are nowise the same. It is strongest in the 'Aareḍ, where religious sympathy is reinforced by national bonds; the Sa'oods are natives of the land, and its long-honoured chieftains, so that the government is here eminently popular, or, to speak more exactly, upheld by the people. Besides, a restless and warlike disposition, joined to poverty at home, renders the character and consequences of the prevalent system especially well pleasing to the highlanders of 'Aareḍ. However, even here exists a reactionary party, men who would gladly see more tobacco and fewer prayers. Yet even these do not precisely desire a change of dynasty, though in case of Feysul's death they would prefer a Sa'ood to an 'Abd-Allah. But in general the partisans of the latter and of strict orthodoxy are at least seven to one throughout 'Aareḍ. In a political and moral point of view this province is, and always has been, of the highest importance.

In the Yemāmah popular feeling is not much dissimilar, though it assumes a somewhat mitigated form. Here too there prevails the deepest hereditary respect for the reigning family; though the well-wishers of Sa'ood outnumber those of 'Abd-Allah, wherein Yemāmah contrasts with 'Aareḍ. The personal presence of Sa'ood, and the less deep-grained dye of fanaticism in the southerly province explain this difference. Both 'Aareḍ and Yemāmah are meanwhile essentially Wāhhābee.

In Hareek, old discord, cruel wars, and displeasing memories have left their traces, and there may be found many families discontented not only with Wāhhābeeism in general, but with the family of Ebn-Sa'ood in particular. This was yet more the case a few years back; at the present day Sa'ood, by frequent visits to Hooṭah, and a peculiar courtesy to its citizens, seems to have won over the majority of hearts; and when the inevitable contest shall ensue between the two brothers, 'Abd-Allah can hardly reckon on a single sword or dagger in his behalf from Hareek.

Aflāj, barren and savage, resembles 'Aareḍ in its inhabitants,

unless that here religious motives form a stronger tie of attachment than political feeling.

This is above all the case in Wādī Dowāsir, where enthusiasm darkens into positive fanaticism of the worst kind, and where the love of plunder comes in to aid even more than in 'Aared itself. The most contemned and the most contemptible among all the Arab race, if history, poetry, and satire (with my own personal experience to boot) hold true, the denizens of Wādī Dowāsir, or Āal-'Aamār, to give them their genuine name, rank the highest in the Wāhhābee and the lowest in the national scale. For ages nothing, they are now, to the misfortune of their neighbours, something by their incorporation with the great Wāhhābee body; and no better exemplification of a certain vulgar proverb touching a beggar on horseback, and whither he will ride, can be found anywhere than among the Khoḍey-reeyah and Āal-'Aamār of Wādī Dowāsir. Needs not say that where pillage is to be had, their ragged troops can always be counted on, be it for Sa'ood or be it for 'Abd-Allah.

Woshem is a very different province. Here predominates the commercial, or at least the shopkeeper spirit, and "it is the cause, it is the cause, my soul," finds a fainter echo in Woshem hearts than anywhere else throughout Djebel Ṭoweyk. But their quiet, unmartial disposition hinders them from being otherwise than good subjects of a government on whose existence mainly depends their substantial profit, while it trebles and quadruples the caravans of pilgrims on the Mecca road, and fills the warehouses of the wayside towns and villages, especially Shaḡra', with whatever merchandise passes from the West to Nejed. In war this province supplies the commissariat rather than the ranks; however, its inhabitants are good Wāhhābees, and if they furnish few "Zelators," produce also few malcontents.

Sedeyr is in extent the largest, and in reputation the highest of all these districts. Here Nejdean generosity, courage, perseverance, and long patience, are animated by somewhat of that enterprising spirit so distinctive of the Shomer population; and in physical qualities the men of Sedeyr have decidedly the advantage over all their neighbours. Here also are those old towns, almost the oldest on Arab records, old families, old and honourable memories. The Sedeyr is the nobleman of Nejed.

The greater proportion of the inhabitants are genuine Wahhābees, and sincerely attached to the tenets of the sect, especially in the southern tracts of the mountain; in the northern districts, their intercourse with Koweyt, Zobeyr, and Djebel Shomer has somewhat unsettled their opinions. On the other hand, there is less political attachment to the Ebn-Sa'oods here than elsewhere in Nejed; many of the chiefs regret their former independence, and the people hanker after an indigenous government. It would require no very violent shock to detach them from the Ri'ad dynasty; but not so from Wahhābee doctrines.

The Bedouins of these six provinces are comparatively few in number, scattered up and down the immense plateau and its varied valleys. They are one and all sincere lovers of civil and religious anarchy, being easily gained and easily lost, in proportion to the strength or weakness of the governing hand; creatures of the day, and a ready tool for invasion or insurrection, disturbance and disorganisation, whoever be the bidder.

Thus much for Nejed Proper, with Ḥareek and Dowāsir. Next follow three great provinces, subject to Nejed for one only sufficient reason, that they cannot free themselves from her; I mean Ḥaṣa, Ḳaṭeef, and Ḳaseem.

Of the inhabitants of Ḳaseem we have already said enough to explain their tendencies; the 'Oneyzah war may suffice for a sample. Gladly would they, and perhaps some day will, ally themselves to the first power, be it what it may, that shall show itself their protector, whether in the name of Ḥejāz or Cairo, Ottoman or Egyptian. The majority here are Mahometans, nowise Wahhābees.

The union of Ḥaṣa and Ḳaṭeef with Nejed is even more unstable and compulsory than that of Ḳaseem. 'Aaseer is ever the constant ally, though not the tributary, of Nejed.

To sum up, we may say that the Wahhābee empire is a compact and well-organised government, where centralization is fully understood and effectually carried out, and whose main-springs and connecting-links are force and fanaticism. There exist no constitutional checks either on the king or on his subordinates, save what the necessity of circumstance imposes or the Coran prescribes. Its atmosphere, to speak metaphorically, is sheer despotism, moral, intellectual, religious, and physical.

This empire is capable of frontier extension, and hence is dangerous to its neighbours, some of whom it is even now swallowing up, and will certainly swallow more, if not otherwise prevented. Incapable of true internal progress, hostile to commerce, unfavourable to arts and even to agriculture, and in the highest degree intolerant and aggressive, it can neither better itself nor benefit others; while the order and calm which it sometimes spreads over the lands of its conquest, are described in the oft-cited *Ubi solitudinem faciunt pacem appellant* of the Roman annalist.

In conclusion, I here subjoin a numerical list, taken partly from the government registers of Ri'ad, partly from local information, and containing the provinces, the number of the principal towns or villages, the population, and the military contingent, throughout the Wahnābee empire. A second list supplies something analogous for the Bedouins existing within its territory.

| Provinces            | Towns or villages | Population      | Military muster |
|----------------------|-------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| I 'Aared . . .       | 15 . . .          | 110,000 . . .   | 6,000           |
| II Yemāmah . . .     | 32 . . .          | 140,000 . . .   | 4,500           |
| III Hareek . . .     | 16 . . .          | 45,000 . . .    | 3,000           |
| IV Aflāj . . .       | 12 . . .          | 14,000 . . .    | 1,200           |
| V Wadi Dowāsir . . . | 50 . . .          | 100,000 . . .   | 4,000           |
| VI Seley'yel . . .   | 14 . . .          | 30,000 . . .    | 1,400           |
| VII Woshem . . .     | 20 . . .          | 80,000 . . .    | 4,000           |
| VIII Sedeyr . . .    | 25 . . .          | 140,000 . . .   | 5,200           |
| IX Kaseem . . .      | 60 . . .          | 300,000 . . .   | 11,000          |
| X Hāṣa . . .         | 50 . . .          | 160,000 . . .   | 7,000           |
| XI Kaṭeef . . .      | 22 . . .          | 100,000 . . .   | —               |
|                      | <hr/> 316         | <hr/> 1,219,000 | <hr/> 47,300    |

Two remarks are here necessary. Firstly, we may notice an occasional disproportion between the number of the inhabitants and that of the villages. This is caused by the varying size and importance of the latter, according to the political and other conditions of the respective provinces. Thus, for example, in Wadi Dowāsir, where no considerable town exists, and the ordinary centres of population are mere hamlets, their number almost equals that assigned to Kaseem, where however the existence of large towns, like 'Oneyzah, Bereydah, Henākeeyah, Rass, and so forth, together with the general fertility of the



country, raises the total of the inhabitants to the triple of what Wadi Dowāsir supplies.

Secondly, the military quota is subject to no less striking inequalities. This again depends in great measure on the character of the districts on the list. Thus Kaṭeef, though thickly peopled, furnishes absolutely nothing to the army, for reasons which will afterwards be explained; while 'Aared, with a scarce higher cipher for its inhabitants, fills the ranks of the Nejdean combatants. Most of these anomalies find their solution in what we have already said in the detail of our journey.

I will now sum up the Bedouin population, a much diminished element of Central Arabia.

| Tribes                       | Population |
|------------------------------|------------|
| I Ajmān . . . . .            | 6,000      |
| II Benoo-Hājar . . . . .     | 4,500      |
| III Benoo-Khālid . . . . .   | 3,000      |
| IV Meteyr . . . . .          | 6,000      |
| V 'Oṭeybah . . . . .         | 12,000     |
| VI Dowāsir . . . . .         | 5,000      |
| VII Sebaa' . . . . .         | 3,000      |
| VIII Kaḥṭān . . . . .        | 6,000      |
| IX Harb . . . . .            | 14,000     |
| X 'Anezah . . . . .          | 3,000      |
| XI Aāl-Morrah . . . . .      | 4,000      |
| Scattered Families . . . . . | 10,000     |
| Total . . . . .              | 76,500     |

The military force of a Bedouin tribe is reckoned at about one-tenth of its entire sum. This calculation gives us 8,000 for the utmost number of nomade warriors under the white and green banner of Ebn-Sa'ood.

Thirdly, I subjoin the amount of annual tribute furnished by the several provinces to the treasury of Ri'ād, exclusive of extraordinary contributions. The estimation is given after the lists in Djowhar's charge, and set down in rials or Spanish dollars, which are employed here, and not unfrequently elsewhere in the East, for a standard of monetary summation; they may, in the Nejdean exchange-market, be roughly reckoned equivalent to about five shillings and sixpence of our own money.

| Provinces            | Tribute     |
|----------------------|-------------|
| I 'Aared . . . . .   | 5,000 Rials |
| II Yemāmah . . . . . | 6,000       |

| Provinces                | Tribute                            |
|--------------------------|------------------------------------|
| III Hareek . . . . .     | 10,000 Rials                       |
| IV Aflāj . . . . .       | 2,000                              |
| V Wadi Dowāsir . . . . . | 4,000                              |
| VI Seley'yel . . . . .   | 3,000                              |
| VII Woshem . . . . .     | 6,000                              |
| VIII Sedeyr . . . . .    | 7,000                              |
| IX Kaseem . . . . .      | 120,000                            |
| X Haşa . . . . .         | 150,000                            |
| XI Kaṭeef . . . . .      | 50,000                             |
| Total . . . . .          | 363,000                            |
|                          | = about 100,000 <i>l.</i> sterling |

To this must be added : firstly, an annual tribute or blackmail of 8,000 rials, or about 2,200*l.* exacted from Baḥreyn. Secondly, a similar contribution levied on the western provinces of 'Omān, and amounting to 20,000 rials = 5,500*l.* sterling. These when added to the former sum, give a total 391,000 rials = 107,000*l.* sterling.

Extraordinary contributions, fines, presents, spoils of war, and the like, are calculated at an almost equal income; nor would the entire revenue of the year be overrated at 160,000*l.* sterling, or even more. And since there is no standing army, no fleet (except two or three miserable vessels at Kaṭeef), and no court retinue of any consequence, to be kept up in Nejed, we may conclude that the Wahhābee government is not much exposed to the danger of incurring a national debt, and that it may even be held wealthy for the country and circumstances.

I will now add by way of appendix an approximative estimate of the like elements in the kingdom of Ṭelāl-ebn-Rasheed. This I might have given before; but I prefer putting the two states side by side; that my readers may have better occasion for remarking several important diversities in population and other respects between the territories of Nejed and Djebel Shomer:—

| Provinces                 | Towns or villages | Population        | Military muster |
|---------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| I Djebel Shomer . . . . . | 40 . . . . .      | 162,000 . . . . . | 6,000           |
| II Djowf . . . . .        | 12 . . . . .      | 40,000 . . . . .  | 2,500           |
| III Kheybar . . . . .     | 8 . . . . .       | 25,000 . . . . .  | 2,000           |
| IV Upper Kaseem . . . . . | 20 . . . . .      | 35,000 . . . . .  | 2,500           |
| V Teyma' . . . . .        | 6 . . . . .       | 12,000 . . . . .  | 1,000           |
| Total . . . . .           | 86 . . . . .      | 274,000 . . . . . | 14,000          |

Follow the Bedouin tribes subject to Ṭelāl :—

| Tribes                      | Total  |
|-----------------------------|--------|
| I Shomer . . . . .          | 80,000 |
| II Sherarat . . . . .       | 40,000 |
| III Howeyṭat . . . . .      | 20,000 |
| IV Benoo-'Ateeyah . . . . . | 6,000  |
| V Ma'āz . . . . .           | 4,000  |
| VI Ṭā'i . . . . .           | 8,000  |
| VII Waḥhidee'yah . . . . .  | 8,000  |

Total . . . . . 166,000

Military muster, about 16,000.

Total of population, 430,000 ; of military force, 30,000

My readers will not fail to notice the far greater proportion of nomades in the north. Of Ṭelāl's revenues I was unable to obtain any exact statement ; but, judging by the state and character of agriculture and commerce in his dominions, I should estimate them at about one-fourth of what Feyṣul receives yearly.

## CHAPTER X

## COURT OF RI'AD—JOURNEY TO HOFHOOF

Let me have  
A dram of poison, such soon-spreading gear  
As will disperse itself through all the veins,  
And that the trunk may be discharged of breath  
As suddenly as hasty powder fired  
Doth hurry from the fatal cannon's womb.

*Shakespeare*

*First Acquaintance with 'Abd-Allah—His Favour—Character of this Prince—  
A Visit to the Royal Stables—The Nejdee Horse—Details on the Breed—  
The Prime Minister Maḥboob—His History, Character, and Conduct—  
Reception of the Persian Nāib at Court—His Annoyance—A Morning  
Visit from the Zelators—Result—Manœuvres of the Nāib with the Rī'ad  
Government—Conclusion of the Negotiation—Preparations against 'Oney-  
zah—Official Correspondence—Arrival of Sa'ood with the Southern Contin-  
gent—Their Reception at Rī'ad—Quarrels of Sa'ood and 'Abd-Allah—  
Interview with Sa'ood—His Character—Relative Position of the two  
Brothers—'Abd-Allah becomes cold and suspicious—Proposal of a Rī'ad  
Establishment—How evaded—The Strychnine Cure—Demand made by  
'Abd-Allah—Our Refusal—A Night-scene at the Palace—Critical Position  
—A Lull—Escape from Rī'ad—Farewell to the Capital—Three Days in  
Wadi Soley—Journey with Aboo-'Eysa and El-Ghannām—Uplands of  
Eastern Ṭoweyk—Laḳey'yāt—Last Range of Ṭoweyk—Landscape—Wells  
of Oweysiṭ—The Dahnā, or Great Desert—A Dangerous Moment—Rej-  
mat Aboo-'Eysa—The Aāl-Morraḥ—Separation of Aboo-'Eysa from El-  
Ghannām—Desert Route—Wadi Farook—The Heights of Ghār and  
Ghoweyr—Descent to the Coast-level—Locusts—Night Arrival at Hofhoof.*

THE first storm had blown over, and all seemed to promise us a quiet and secure residence in the capital, so long as we should choose to abide there. Djowhar had won us a fair outset reputation, and every day brought new consultations and acquaintances, most of a favourable character. Feyṣul, whose apprehensions were now somewhat calmed, had returned to his palace, and after some delay mustered up courage enough to



accord the Nā'ib a private audience in the inner divan. Mohammed-'Alee was not however over-pleased with his reception, and could not understand the coolness with which the "Bedouin" (the only title avouched by the Shirāzee to the Nejdean monarch) received his long list of grievances ; nor did Maḥboob display much zeal in the furtherance of his cause. We, for our part, had agreed with Aboo-'Eysa not to request any special interview with Feysul ; the old man was a mere tool in the hands of his ministers and of the "Zelator" faction ; and while no useful result could be expected from our presence in his divan, it might on the other hand give rise to jealous suspicions and to idle conjecture.

But 'Abd-Allah, exempt from the senile fears which agitated his father's breast, was not disposed to let us remain long without the favour of his personal acquaintance. Not desiring intimacy with him, we had avoided the chances of meeting. However, many days had not gone by, when we received a message requesting our appearance before him. The bearer of his highness's invitation was also by name 'Abd-Allah, a Nejdean of the Nejdeans, belonging to the sourest and the most bigoted class ; lean limbed, sallow featured, and wrinkled ; intelligent indeed and active, but by no means an agreeable companion. This worthy informed us that the health of his uncle (polite style for 'Abd-Allah), was something deranged, and that he in consequence desired a doctor's visit. He concluded by recommending us not to delay compliance with the royal wish.

We put on clean over-dresses and went to 'Abd-Allah's palace. There we had to pass two outer courts before we reached a vestibule, just at the other end of which was the prince's private K'hāwah. The morning was far advanced, and the heat within doors oppressive. 'Abd-Allah had taken his seat on a carpet spread in the vestibule, with three or four attendants at his side. Many others, some white, some black, plainly dressed, but all armed, stood or sat by the portal, and in the outer courts ; an ungenial-looking set they were, especially the true-born Nejdeans.

Were it not for a haughty, almost an insolent, expression on his features, and a marked tendency to corpulency—an hereditary defect, it would seem, in some branches of the family—'Abd-Allah would not be an ill-looking man. As he is, he

resembles in a degree certain portraits of Henry VIII, nor are the two characters wholly dissimilar. On our approach, he mustered up a sort of rough politeness, and gave us a tolerably encouraging reception, though I soon found that the story of his bodily indisposition was a mere pretext for gratifying his curiosity. Of course no mention of 'Obeyd or his letter crossed our lips. 'Abd-Allah made some general enquiries about Djebel Shomer, for he had been already informed of our visit there, manifested much ill-will against Telāl, railed at the defenders of 'Oneyzah, and cursed Zāmil. Then began a series of unscientific medical queries about temperaments—bilious, lymphatic, sanguine, and the like. He was particularly anxious to know what his own temperament might be, and I rose considerably in his estimation by assuring him it was a happy combination of all four. He next made us repeated assurances of protection and good will, nor do I believe that they were for the moment hypocritical, since he had not yet any particular suspicions on our score. Lastly, he ordered rather than requested our attendance at an early hour next morning, and wished us to bring our medical books along with us, professing himself very desirous to learn the healing art: "a promising pupil," thought I, and so doubtless will my readers.

He was, however, in earnest, and when next day we were introduced into the little or private K'hāwah, and honourably treated with coffee and perfumes, he kept us for a full hour reading and being read to, partly from my own Boulac-printed volume, and partly from a dateless manuscript belonging to his highness's library, wherein therapeutic traditions of the Prophet (proving him, alas! to have been a very poor medical authority), old definitions and receipts stolen from second-hand translations of Galen, and spoilt by the way, were jumbled together, with Persian names of plants and botany of Upper Egyptian idiom, till "a Daniel, yea, a Daniel," would have been puzzled to find out the interpretation thereof. Of course we treated the work with great deference, and tried to engraft on it somehow or other more authentic explanations; with what success I hardly know. But at any rate we succeeded in securing a large share of the royal confidence, and now, when we passed by the palace attendants, if white they smiled on us, if black grinned, till we felt quite at home.

For about three weeks matters continued on this amiable footing. Almost every day came a general or a special invitation to visit the prince, and pass two or three hours of the forenoon or night amid the atmosphere of royalty. Nor was his highness at all reserved. He talked politics, and with all the insolence of ignorance would scoff at those very powers which had only a few years before annihilated the empire of his ancestors, beheaded one of his predecessors, driven another to years of exile, and shut up his own father in long captivity. However, Constantinople and Cairo were nothing in 'Abd-Allah's sight, and when on one occasion I asked him casually if he had been to Mecca, "I will go there," answered he, "but on horse-back;" with an implied meaning that we may perhaps see realised in our own day. Then followed the wildest plans for storming 'Oneyzah, how the walls were to be breached by cannon, or might better still, seeing that they are of unbaked brick, be melted down by a gigantic water-engine; how he would cut off Zāmil's head, &c. A series of successes over marauding Bedouins and unwarlike neighbours, had led the prince to believe the Nejdeans the first army, and himself the first general, on earth. Yet take it all in all, it was not mere brag, for within the limits of the Peninsula 'Abd-Allah stands a fair chance of overriding be it who it may; and Egypt has not every century an Ibraheem Basha to command her armies.

During this time I got a sight of the royal stables, an event much desired and eagerly welcomed. For the Nejdean horse is considered no less superior to all others of his kind in Arabia, than is the Arabian breed collectively to the Persian, Cape of Good Hope, or Indian. In Nejed is the true birthplace of the Arab steed, the primal type, the authentic model. Thus at any rate I heard, and thus, so far at least as my experience goes, it appears to me; although I am aware that distinguished authorities maintain another view. But at any rate, among all the studs of Nejed, Feyṣul's was indisputably the first; and who sees that has seen the most consummate specimens of equine perfection in Arabia, perhaps in the world.

It happened that a mare in the imperial stud had received a bite close behind the shoulder from some sportive comrade; and the wound, ill-dressed and ill-managed, had festered into a sore puzzling the most practised Nejdean farriers. One morning



while Barakāt and myself were sitting in 'Abd-Allah's K'hāwah, a groom entered to give the prince the daily bulletin of his stables. 'Abd-Allah turned towards me, and enquired whether I would undertake the cure. Gladly I accepted the proposal of visiting the patient, though limiting my proffer of services to a simple inspection, and declining systematic interference with what properly belonged to the veterinary province. The prince gave his orders accordingly; and in the afternoon a groom, good-natured as grooms generally are, knocked at our door, and conducted me straight to the stables.

These are situated some way out of the town, to the north-east, a little to the left of the road which we had followed at our first arrival, and not far from the gardens of 'Abd-er-Rahmān the Wāhhābee. They cover a large square space, about 150 yards each way, and are open in the centre, with a long shed running round the inner walls; under this covering the horses, about three hundred in number when I saw them, are picketed during night; in the daytime they may stretch their legs at pleasure within the central courtyard. The greater number were accordingly loose; a few, however, were tied up at their stalls; some, but not many, had horse-cloths over them. The heavy dews which fall in Wadi Haneefah do not permit their remaining with impunity in the open night air; I was told also that a northerly wind will occasionally injure the animals here, no less than the land wind does now and then their brethren in India. About half the royal stud was present before me, the rest were out at grass; Feysul's entire muster is reckoned at six hundred head, or rather more.

No Arab dreams of tying up a horse by the neck; a tether replaces the halter; and one of the animal's hind-legs is encircled about the pastern by a light iron ring, furnished with a padlock, and connected with an iron chain of two feet or thereabouts in length, ending in a rope, which is fastened to the ground at some distance by an iron peg; such is the customary method. But should the animal be restless and troublesome, a fore-leg is put under similar restraint. It is well known that in Arabia horses are much less frequently vicious or refractory than in Europe, and this is the reason why geldings are here so rare, though not unknown. No particular prejudice that I could discover exists against the operation itself; only it is seldom



performed, because not otherwise necessary, and tending of course to diminish the value of the animal.

But to return to the horses now before us ; never had I seen or imagined so lovely a collection. Their stature was indeed somewhat low ; I do not think that any came fully up to fifteen hands ; fourteen appeared to me about their average ; but they were so exquisitely well shaped that want of greater size seemed hardly, if at all, a defect. Remarkably full in the haunches, with a shoulder of a slope so elegant as to make one, in the words of an Arab poet, "go raving mad about it ;" a little, a very little, saddle-backed, just the curve which indicates springiness without any weakness ; a head broad above, and tapering down to a nose fine enough to verify the phrase of "drinking from a pint-pot," did pint-pots exist in Nejed ; a most intelligent and yet a singularly gentle look, full eye, sharp thorn-like little ear, legs fore and hind that seemed as if made of hammered iron, so clean and yet so well twisted with sinew ; a neat round hoof, just the requisite for hard ground ; the tail set on or rather thrown out at a perfect arch ; coats smooth, shining, and light ; the mane long, but not overgrown nor heavy ; and an air and step that seemed to say "look at me, am I not pretty ?" their appearance justified all reputation, all value, all poetry. The prevailing colour was chestnut or grey ; a light bay, an iron colour, white, or black, were less common ; full bay, flea-bitten, or piebald, none. But if asked what are, after all, the specially distinctive points of the Nejdee horse, I should reply, the slope of the shoulder, the extreme cleanness of the shank, and the full rounded haunch, though every other part too has a perfection and a harmony unwitnessed (at least by my eyes) anywhere else.

Unnecessary to say that I had often met with and after a fashion studied horses throughout this journey ; but I purposely deferred saying much about them till this occasion. At Hā'yel and in Djebel Shomer I found very good examples of what is commonly called the Arab horse : a fine breed, and from among which purchases are made every now and then by European princes, peers, and commoners, often at astounding prices. These are for the most part the produce of a mare from Djebel Shomer or its neighbourhood, and a Nejdean stallion, sometimes the reverse ; but never, it would seem (although here I am, of

course, open to correction by the "logic of facts"), thorough Nejdee on both sides. With all their excellences, these horses are less systematically elegant, nor do I remember having ever seen one among them free from some one weak point; perhaps a little heaviness in the shoulder, perhaps a slight falling off in the rump, perhaps a shelly or a contracted hoof, or too small an eye. Their height also is much more varied; some of them attain sixteen hands, others are down to fourteen. Every one knows the customary divisions of their pedigrees: Manaḳee, Siḳlawee, Ḥamdanee, Ṭoreyfee, and so forth; I myself made a list of these names during a residence some years previous among the Sebaa' and Ru'ala Bedouins, nor did I find any difference worth noting between what was then told me and the accounts usually given by travellers and authors on this topic. Nor did the Bedouins fail to recite their oft-repeated legends about Solomon's stables, &c. But I am inclined to consider the greater part of these very pedigrees, and still more the antiquity of their origin, as comparatively recent inventions, and of small credit, got up for the market of Bedouins or townsmen. Nor is a Koḥlanee mare by any means a warrant for a Koḥlanee stallion; crossing the breed is an everyday occurrence, even in Shomer. Once arrived at this last district, I heard no more of Siḳlawee, Delhamee, or any other like genealogies; nor were Solomon's stables better known to fame than those of Augeus. In Nejed I was distinctly assured that no prolonged lists of pedigrees were ever kept, and that all enquiries about race are limited to the assurance of a good father and a good mother; for Solomon, added the groom, he was much more likely to have taken horses from us than we from him; a remark which proved in him who made it a certain amount of historical criticism. In a word, to be a successful jockey in Nejed requires about the same degree of investigation and knowledge that it would in Yorkshire, and no more; perhaps even less, considering the stud-books.

The genuine Nejdean breed, so far as I have hitherto found, is to be met with only in Nejed itself; nor are these animals common even there; none but chiefs or individuals of considerable wealth and rank possess them. Nor are they ever sold, at least so all declare; and when I asked how then one could be acquired, "by war, by legacy, or by free gift," was the answer.

In this last manner alone is there a possibility of an isolated specimen leaving Nejed, but even that is seldom; and when policy requires a present to Egypt, Persia, or Constantinople (a circumstance of which I witnessed two instances and heard of others), mares are never sent, and the poorest stallions, though deserving to pass elsewhere for real beauties, are picked out for the purpose.

'Abd-Allah, Sa'ood, and Mohammed keep their horses in separate stables, each one containing a hundred or thereabouts. After much enquiry and remark, my companion and I came to the conclusion that the total Nejdean horse-census would not sum up above five thousand, and probably falls short even of that number. The fact that here the number of horsemen in an army is perfectly inconsiderable when compared to that of the camel riders, may be added in confirmation, especially since in Nejed horses are never used except for war or parade, while all travel work and other drudgery falls on camels, sometimes on asses.

Pretty stories have been circulated about the familiarity existing between Arabs, Bedouins in particular, and their steeds; how the foal at its birth is caught in the hands of bystanders, not allowed to fall on the ground, how it plays with the children of the house, eats and drinks with its master, how he tends it when indisposed, whilst it no doubt returns him a similar service when occasion requires. That the Arab horse is much gentler, and in a general way more intelligent than the close-stabled, blinkered, harnessed, condemned-cell-prisoner animal of "merry England," I willingly admit; matters, alas! cannot be otherwise. Brought up in close contact with men, and enjoying the comparatively free use of his senses and limbs, the Arab quadruped is in a fair way for developing to full advantage whatever feeling and instinct good blood brings with it, nor does this often fail to occur. If, however, we come to the particular incidents of Arab horse-life just alluded to, they certainly form no general rule or etiquette in practice, nor would any Arab be the worse thought of for rapping his mare over the nose if she thrust it into his porridge, or for leaving nature to do the office of midwife when she is in an interesting condition. Still I do not mean to say that the creditable anecdotes immortalised in so many books may not perhaps take place here and there, but, to

quote an Arab poet, "I never saw the like nor ever heard." For my own personal experience, it goes no farther than feeding Arab horses out of my hand, not dish, and prevailing on them, better than the spirits of the vasty deep, to come when I did call for them.

After a delightful hour passed in walking up and down among these beautiful creatures, attended by grooms professionally sensible to all the excellences of horseflesh, I examined the iron-grey mare in question, saw another whose appetite was ailing, prescribed a treatment which if it did no good could certainly do no harm, and left with longing lingering look behind, the stables, whither however I subsequently paid not unfrequent visits, befitting to a doctor.

Farther on, when we cross the eastern and southern limits of Toweyk, we find the Arab breed rapidly losing in beauty and perfection, in size and strength. The specimens of indigenous race that I saw in 'Omān considerably resembled the "tattoes" of India; but in the eastern angle of Arabia the deficiency of horses is in a way made up for by the dromedaries of that land.

Nejdee horses are especially esteemed for great speed and endurance of fatigue; indeed, in this latter quality none come up to them. To pass twenty-four hours on the road without drink and without flagging is certainly something; but to keep up the same abstinence and labour conjoined under the burning Arabian sky for forty-eight hours at a stretch is, I believe, peculiar to the animals of the breed. Besides they have a delicacy, I cannot say of mouth, for it is common to ride them without bit or bridle, but of feeling and obedience to the knee and thigh, to the slightest check of the halter and the voice of the rider, far surpassing whatever the most elaborate manège gives a European horse, though furnished with snaffle, curb, and all. I often mounted them at the invitation of their owners, and without saddle, rein, or stirrup, set them off at full gallop, wheeled them round, brought them up in mid career at a dead halt, and that without the least difficulty or the smallest want of correspondence between the horse's movements and my own will; the rider on their back really feels himself the man-half of a centaur, not a distinct being. This is in great part owing to the Arab system of breaking in, much preferable to the



European in conferring pliancy and perfect tractability. Nor is mere speed much valued in a horse unless it be united with the above qualities, since whether in the contest of an Arab race, or in the pursuit and flight of war, "doubling" is far more the rule than "going ahead," at least for any distance. Much the same training is required for the sport of the Djereed, that tournament of the East, and which, as I witnessed it in Nejed, differed in nothing from the exhibitions frequent in Syria and Egypt, except that the palm-stick or "Djereed" itself is a little lighter. I should add that in the stony plateaus of Nejed, horses are always shod, but the shoe is clumsy and heavy; the hoof is very slightly pared, and the number of nails put in invariably six. Were not the horn excellent, Nejdean farriery would lame many a fine horse.

While we advanced in 'Abd-Allah's good graces, and prescribed now for his four-legged and now for his two-legged servants, Maḥboob, moved by the encomiums of his father, Djowhar, condescended to pay us a visit, which prudence had prevented us from the courtesy of anticipating. Prime minister Maḥboob, and what a prime minister! Luckily for me, Aboo-'Eysa had so often given me his excellency's portrait, that I did not mistake him at his first entrance, but my companion Barakāt did, and could hardly believe when told that the individual before him was the main column of Nejed and of the whole Wahnabee empire.

Born of a Georgian slave-woman, herself a present from 'Abbas Basha to Feyṣul at his first accession, Maḥboob, now about twenty-five years of age, presented so very boyish, so un-Nejdean, so un-Arab an appearance, that I was utterly startled. His father is Djowhar, our black patient—I mean his legal father; for so white a complexion, such smooth streaky hair, such blue eyes, such symmetrically proportioned limbs, never owned a black for physical parent, unless indeed my study and my books be false, and my observations too. The fact is, that while the official tongue, with a prudence which I shall imitate throughout my narrative, designates Djowhar as father of the prime minister, no one high or low entertains a doubt of Feyṣul's own better right to that endearing title. Needs not enter into the details of court mysteries or scandal, if scandal can find place in Nejed: my readers may take it on my word

that so sure as the Georgian woman is Maḥboob's mother, so sure Feysul, her first master and possessor, is Maḥboob's father.

The youth is clever, of that there could be no doubt ; that he is daring is equally certain. A taste for general literature, and a spirit of research indicative of Caucasian origin, may also be remarked in him. But vanity, imprudence, overbearing pride, despotic cruelty, and a levity of manner strangely contrasting with the gravity customary at Ri'ad, are equally the share of Maḥboob, nor any wonder, considering his origin and palace education. These faults are however in a measure veiled, nay, rendered almost becoming, by a manly independence of thought and manner, an outspoken tone, and a hearty cheerfulness at times, not generally found in the Nejdeans around him ; qualities certainly due to his mother rather than to his father, whoever that may be. Last, not least perhaps, he is remarkably handsome, almost beautiful, a thorough Georgian ; in a word, Byron's Arnold in the strange dream of the "Deformed Transformed," came often in my mind while conversing with the graceful but bloodstained Maḥboob. Thus endowed in mind and body, this half-caste Caucasian stripling, at an age when well-born Englishmen are being plucked in the Schools, or serving as cornets or midshipmen, leads by the nose the old tyrant of Nejed, browbeats his terrible son, commands the servility of courtiers, chiefs, and Zelators, and wields almost alone the destinies of more than half the Arabian Peninsula.

Maḥboob's first visit to us was very characteristic. Little ceremony, much familiarity, a second question asked before the first was answered, everything rapidly examined—books, drugs, dress, and all ; a cup of coffee hastily swallowed, a word of encouragement and patronage, a very European shake of the hand, and then farewell till next meeting.

Aboo'Eysa, whose main prop at court was no other than Maḥboob, and whose lot was now in a way bound up with our own, was extremely anxious that this first interview should be followed up by a closer intimacy, nor was I at all reluctant to study more at leisure so exceptional and at the same time so important a personage. To this end I returned the call next day, in company with Aboo'Eysa.

Maḥboob was seated in Djowhar's divan. To Aboo'Eysa he showed all the familiarity of an old patron, and extended much

of the same hand-in-hand manner to myself. But this time he pushed his interrogations further than before, and I discovered that the minister did me the honour of supposing me of similar origin with himself, namely, an Egyptian by country, and born of a Georgian or Circassian. Such a supposition had in Ri'ad a very peculiar bearing, and influenced not a little the events which followed.

Maḥboob was inwardly convinced that we were in reality more or less spies, sent by the Egyptian government, probably with reference to the Ḳaseem war and the siege of 'Oneyzah. This was no bad conjecture; the route we had traversed, the books in our possession, the very fact of (comparatively) superior medical knowledge, my own pronunciation, all tended to justify this idea. Not that Maḥboob said it in so many words, but it was easy to perceive the drift of his thought, the more so from his careless and desultory manner. Meanwhile Moḥammed, 'Abd-el-Laṭeef's younger brother, had got up an enormous lie of his having personally known me while in Egypt, of all my past history and present intentions; a series of fictions readily contradicted, but not to be with equal readiness effaced.

After this first meeting in Djowhar's Ḳ'hāwah, Maḥboob opened to me his own, and there I often passed several hours of the succeeding days. His library was the most copious that I had yet seen in Arabia; it consisted of the works of many well-known poets, among whom were Ebn-el-'Āṭiḥeeyah, Motenebbi, Aboo-l-'Ola, besides the Divan of Ḥariri, the Ḥamāsa, and other works of classic Arab literature; along with these, treatises on law and religion by Mālekee and Ḥanbelee authors, commentaries on the Coran, books of travels, touching whose authenticity least said were soonest mended; geographical treatises, dividing the world into seven regions, of which Arabia was of course the first and by far the greatest, and much else of like manufacture. The most interesting work for me was a manuscript history of the Wāḥḥabee empire, preceded by a general sketch of Arab annals; the ante-Islamitic portion closely resembled that given by Aboo-l-Feda, perhaps was copied from him; the space intervening between the wars of Khālīd-e-bn-el-Waleed and the rise of the Sa'ood dynasty, related to Nejed alone. Account books, muster rolls, official

correspondence and the like, were stowed away in a large side cabinet ; but the folding doors were frequently left open, and I was able to get an occasional look at the documents, of which my Arab census in the last chapter is in a great measure an extract. Maḥboob raised hardly any difficulty to my taking notes or copying passages, especially out of the literary works ; I regret that some of the papers then written were lost in the subsequent casualties of my journey.

The prime minister promised much and did something. He took care that we should be duly supplied from the palace with the entire list of Nejdean luxuries—butcher's meat and coffee—besides making me a handsome present of ready money, which I accepted in hopes of thereby lessening his preconceived suspicions. But his eye was always on me with the restless unsatisfied expression of one who pries into deep water for something at the bottom and cannot quite distinguish it ; however, a supposed sympathy of race inclined him to be friendly.

Meanwhile both Maḥboob and 'Abd-Allah made fun of the old Nā'ib to their hearts' content ; and he too in his turn fleered at them. The Persian, finding Feyṣul hopelessly cold in his cause, resolved on a visit to his son and heir, and having arrayed himself in all his finery, called at the prince's palace. When introduced into the K'hāwah, he found 'Abd-Allah stretched out on the carpet Bedouin-fashion, back uppermost, with a cushion under his elbows to prop him up, and much in the position of a dog when he puts his muzzle on his fore-paws and looks at you. "Welcome," said the gracious prince to the approaching ambassador, and motioned him to sit down, without the while changing his own unceremonious posture. Then, after a minute of staring, "Is your beard dyed?" was the first princely question. I should say that staining the hair is looked on by Wahnābees as an unlawful encroachment on the rights of the Creator to bestow on His creatures whatever colouring He chooses. The Nā'ib in a grave but somewhat vexed tone allowed that his beard was dyed, and asked what was the matter even if it were? "Because," replied 'Abd-Allah, "we consider such a practice to be highly improper." Whereto the Nā'ib dryly answered, that the Persians thought otherwise. "Are you a Sonnee or a Shiya'ee?" next enquired the reclining majesty. The Nā'ib's patience, always scant, was now at an



end. "I am a Shiya'ee, and my father was a Shiya'ee, and my grandfather was a Shiya'ee, and we are all Shiya'ees," answered he, in a tone of downright passion; "but you, 'Abd-Allah, what are you, a prince or a chaplain?" The whole in that broken Arabic which rendered anger impossible. "A prince," replied 'Abd-Allah, looking very big. "Because," rejoined the Persian, "I thought from your questions you were a chaplain; and if you are indeed so, get you off to the mosque; that is the place, not a palace, for one who talks in your style." 'Abd-Allah burst out laughing, and made an apology worse than the fault, by pretending ignorance of diplomatic usages and the respect due to ambassadors, and then changed the discourse. All this was nohow real levity or clownishness in the Nejdee; his insolence was the result of cool and deliberate calculation, designed to bring the Persian down to the right point for the bargain already resolved on by Feysul and his son. The Nā'ib came away in a fury against the Bedouin, and 'Aboo-Eysa had much ado to prevent his leaving the capital in a huff that very day.

Nor was he more successful with Maḥboob, to whom he paid many ceremonious visits, in hope of gaining his influence with the old king, and never without hearing something premeditatedly offensive on the score of Persians and Shiya'ees. These last, among their many other fancies, have an excessive and superstitious reverence for the written names of holy personages, and hold the wilful destruction of such words to be an atrocious crime. On one occasion, while the Nā'ib was present in the divan, Maḥboob received some letters bearing the customary heading, "In the name of God." These letters the minister read, and then, before the Persian's face, tore them across and threw them into the fire burning on the hearth. Moḥammed-'Alee nearly fainted with horror. But worse followed. The Shirāzee had with him a silver drinking-cup of Persian workmanship, and beautifully embossed, with the five names so venerated by Persians—Moḥammed, 'Alee, Faṭimah, Ḥasan, and Ḥoseyn—worked on the rim. This goblet he one day brought with him to the palace, with the view of "astonishing the natives." Maḥboob took it in his hand, turned it round, and on reading the characters about the edge exclaimed, "What are these abominable inscriptions?" and flung the cup on the ground. The Nā'ib's feelings may be better imagined than

described. During the quiet evening hours that we often passed in his cool upper apartments, smoking his Nargheelahs and talking over the events of the day, we had the advantage of hearing from his own mouth all these incidents, and many more of like tenor.

A comical event which occurred about this time brought matters, as they say, to a crisis, and by its pre-eminent absurdity rescued the Nā'ib from further outrages to his Shiya'ee feelings. I have already said that morning and evening roll-calls were daily read in the mosques belonging to the several quarters of the town, and that absentees were liable to very practical admonitions towards better attendance in future. Of course neither the Nā'ib and his men as Shiya'ees, nor Barakāt and myself as Christians, troubled ourselves much with Wahnābee congregational attendance. One morning the "Zelator" superintendent of the mosque, to which according to our place of residence we were supposed to belong, took it into his head that infidels or not we were bound in common decency to act like orthodox Muslims: "cum Romæ fueris, Romano vivitur usu." Accordingly our two names, with those of the Nā'ib and his posse, were read out among the rest, but there was no voice nor any that answered. Hereon the indignant Zelator collected a pious band armed with sticks and staves; and a little before sunrise presented himself at our door, the nearest on his rounds. Luckily the door was bolted from within, while Barakāt, Aboo-'Eysa, and myself were, in place of prayers and ablutions, smoking our morning pipes over a very excellent cup of coffee. When Aboo-'Eysa heard the knock, which his bad conscience at once interpreted, he was terribly frightened, knowing by experience that Wahnābee fanaticism when once up is no trifling matter. Turning quite pale, he begged us to return no answer to the summons, but to hide ourselves within an inner chamber. Barakāt, on the contrary, with all the courage of a Zaḥlawee, determined to face the danger, went right to the door, opened it suddenly, and stepping out slammed it to as suddenly behind him, without giving the visitors time to enter. Next ensued the following parley in the street:—

"Why did you not come to prayers this morning?" "We have already said our prayers; what kind of atheists do you take us for?" "Why then did you not answer when your

names were called over?" enquired the Zelator, supposing from the other's ready equivocation that we must have been somehow or other at the mosque. "We imagined that you Wahnābees had some peculiar ceremony of your own which did not concern us foreigners; how are we to know all your customs?" replied the unabashed Barakāt. "Who was your right-hand man when you stood up to prayer?" enquired the doubting cross-questioner. "Some Bedouin or other; is it my business to know all the Bedouins in Ri'ad?" answered my companion. "And who was on your left?" "The wall." Which last was said with such an air of innocence and unconcern, that the stick-bearers knew not what to make of it. So, like good Arabs, they allowed us the benefit of doubt, and passed on after an admonition to be regular in our religious duties. "If God wills it," was the vague but orthodox answer.

From our door the holy squadron passed to that of the Nā'ib. Here a thundering knock was at once answered by 'Alee, the younger servant, who with unsuspecting rashness flung the entrance wide open. No quarter to Persians: "Throw him down, beat him, purify his hide," was shouted out on all sides, and the foremost laid hold of the astonished Shiya'ee to inflict the legal chastisement. But 'Alee was a big strapping lad, and not easily floored; he soon tore himself away from his well-intentioned executioners, and rushed into the interior of the house calling madly for aid on his brother Ḥasan. Out came the elder with a pistol in either hand, while 'Alee having picked up a dagger brandished it fearfully; and the old Nā'ib, aroused from sleep in his upstairs bedroom, leaned over the parapet in his dressing-gown, like Shelley's "grey tyrant father," and screamed out from above Persian threats and curses. The Zelators turned tail and fled in confusion; 'Alee and Ḥasan ran after, sword and pistol in hand, half-way down the street, beating one, kicking another, and leaving a third sprawling in the dust.

Without delay the Nā'ib donned his clothes and went to the palace, there to demand justice for the housebreaking aggression thus committed, and to protest very reasonably this time against the absurdity of compulsory attendance on divine worship. We did not think it necessary to accompany him, since our affair had at any rate ended smoothly. But Aboo'Eysa,

who had gone with the Nā'ib, played the orator in our behalf. The result was a royal order issued to the Zelators not to trouble themselves further about us and our doings; while, in compensation for past insults, the Persian ambassador was henceforth treated at the palace with greater decency by Maḥboob and his crew.

It may be well to recount at once the remainder of Moḥammed-'Alee's fortunes at Ri'ad. After a month of veering and tacking, speeding to-day, put back to-morrow, and never getting nearer to the point, Aboo-'Eysa told him plainly what he had already suggested more than once, but without effect—that in the Wakhābee capital it was money, and money alone, that could make the mare to go, and that if he desired a speedy and a favourable solution of his difficulties, he had only to make some judicious offerings, and all would be well.

Sad news this to Moḥammed-'Alee, close-fisted as Persians usually are; however, he had no other course open. Next day the double-barrelled fowling-piece went to 'Abd-Allah, the tea-making machine to Maḥboob, a beautiful ruby found its way to Feyṣul's inner chamber; and I believe that the king's fair daughter, the she-secretary of the cabinet, obtained her share of the gifts. The effect was magical. Instantaneously, a magnificent letter of apology for "past accidents" was drawn up, addressed to the Shah, and signed by Feyṣul, wherein all the blame of whatever had befallen the caravan was safely thrown on the luckless Aboo-Boṭeyn, now a refugee among the "infidels" at 'Oneyzah; but no sooner should Heaven have delivered him up to the vengeance of the faithful, than the wretch should be put in irons and sent to Ṭeheran to answer for himself before the majesty of Persia, unless indeed he were killed first, as might be hopefully anticipated. Not a word about Mohanna. Nor a word either (I read the document myself) about costs and damages, except what Aboo-Boṭeyn was to refund—when the hare was caught, which, please God, should soon be the case.

In conclusion, the better to stop the Nā'ib's mouth, and to prevent too urgent representations on the score of his plundered followers, some presents were offered him. An elderly horse, which might at Bombay have brought two hundred rupees or thereabouts; a camel, worth in Nejed from six to seven rials,



somewhat less than two pounds English; three or four cloaks of Ḥaṣa manufacture, and of second-rate quality, were thrown as a sop to Cerberus, and greedily swallowed. The Na'ib was no judge of horse-flesh or camel-flesh either; the cloaks too were new to him, and he very properly supposed the gift-horse and raiment to be each the very best in their kind. In return he pledged his word that the Persian pilgrims should continue to pursue the route of Nejed, and pay for it also. It was a scoundrelly business from beginning to end, and did little honour either to the merchandising Sultan of Nejed and his subordinates or to the Persian who deliberately sold his countrymen's rights and the interests of his government for an old horse, an old camel, and some old cloaks.

As a corollary to these manœuvres, Aboo-'Eysa procured for himself a royal patent naming him head conductor from the Persian coast to Mecca of all future pilgrim bands, to the permanent exclusion of competitors; a measure which had at least the advantage of ensuring to the unlucky Shiya'ees a certain amount of good treatment while on their road, and of putting our friend in possession of emoluments sufficient to meet even his own extravagant habits and ostentatious generosity.

One question yet remained to be settled by Moḥammed-'Alee, namely, by what road he should return to Meshid and thence to Bagdad and Ṭeheran. Winter was setting in, and the land route, leading mainly over high ground, might prove disagreeably cold, even in Arabia. This and other valid reasons would have led him to prefer the easier and warmer line of journey through Ḥaṣa, and thence by ship up the Persian Gulf and the Shaṭṭ-el-'Aarab to Meshid 'Alee, instead of the weary track by the mountains of Sedeyr, Zulphah, and the up-country. But Moḥammed-'Alee was a devout Shiya'ee, and as such must needs first consult his luck by counting his beads. Thrice his computation notified to him the heaven-sent warning to adopt not the former, but the latter path, and this he accordingly did, with much loss of time and increase of expense and trouble.

My readers perhaps know (if they do not, it is worth remarking) that a Persian, and in fact a Shiya'ee in general, even though not by birth a Persian, can do nothing, not so much as drink a cup of coffee or light a Nargheelah, without counting his luck on his rosary; a ridiculous custom, and justly repro-

bated by the Wahnābees, whose hatred of magic, spells, charms, and the rest of that category, extends also to divinations and omens of whatever sort, dream interpretations, lucky or unlucky days, and the like; a favourable piece of witness which I am glad to be able to render the Wahnābees.

In the last week of November, just before our own departure, Moḥammed-'Alee with all his attendants set off for Sedeyr, and in the following spring I was rejoiced on learning at Bagdad that he and his had arrived in safety at their journey's end.

The two Meccan beggars, our companions from Ḥā'yel hither, got a shirt and two rials apiece, with which munificent present one of them went to Baṣrah, where he passed himself off for a Sey'yid, and invested in a huge turban; the other set his face westward, and went—I know not whither. We will now resume the course of events.

During these forty days active preparations were making in Nejed for the decisive blow to be struck at 'Oneyzah. What had hitherto been sent against that town were little more than mere skirmishing parties, and consisted of a certain number of men from Aflāj and Sedeyr, from Zulphah and Shaḡra', with a few warriors of 'Aareḡ and Yemāmah to keep up the spirits of the rest, and a younger son of Feysul's to command. The intention of the Wahnābee council was, that when occasional attacks, joined with the half-blockade, should have sufficiently weakened their enemy, the whole force of Central and Southern Nejed, with that of the great eastern provinces, should be brought to bear. The entire expedition was to be entrusted to the invincible and murderous 'Abd-Allah.

The appointed time now drew on, and Yemāmah and Ḥareek were ordered to send in their contingent, Soley' and Dowāsir were called on for their rude militia, while the levy from Ḥaṣa with the artillery of Ḳaṭeef was to come, and along with the dreaded battalions of 'Aareḡ itself, to complete the besieging army. What chance could be left to one isolated town, however strong, against such a concentration of assailing force?

Zāmil and his adherents felt that their ruin was not only planned, but certain. No hope remained them from the Shereef of Mecca, and Egypt was for them, no less than for the Israelites of old, a broken reed. Accordingly, they sent submissive, nay suppliant, letters to Feysul, offered allegiance, tribute, and

obedience, renewed their protestations of orthodoxy, appealed to the brotherhood of Islam, and, lastly, rendered the Sultan of Nejed responsible for all the evils of war and a city taken by storm. Feysul was moved, relented of his purpose, and would gladly have accepted a submission so humbly tendered, and the refusal of which must draw after it such awful responsibility. But Maḥboob looked forward with all the ambition of rising power to the great extension of Wahnābee prerogative consequent on the fall of 'Oneyzah; while 'Abd-Allah, ferocious in the anticipation of success, was no more disposed to let slip a lesson in his art, or a laurel leaf from his garland, than he whom history or libel reports to have fought the battle of Nimwegen with the treaty of Utrecht in his pocket. The Zelators also, on their side, besieged the old and vacillating monarch, and urged him to unsparing severity. Long consultations were held in the palace, and at last Feysul's ultimatum was sent. "Give up Zāmil, El-Khey'yāt, and the other ringleaders of revolt," so ran the document, "and then, not till then, will I treat of peace." Death was more tolerable to the men of 'Oneyzah than compliance on such terms, and no further answer was returned. I myself obtained, through Maḥboob, a sight of the letter from 'Oneyzah, and of the reply, though of course I was not admitted to the council itself, for my account of which I depend on current report.

'Abd-Allah made no secret of his joy, and prepared for a speedy departure. Meanwhile Feysul sent orders to his second-born Sa'ood, to bring up the troops of Hareek, and to hand them over when in Ri'ad to his elder brother, whose special office as governor of the capital he, Sa'ood, was to fill during the absence of the latter at 'Oneyzah. Sa'ood speedily arrived, and with him about two hundred horsemen; the rest of his men, more than two thousand, were mounted on camels. When they entered Ri'ad, Feysul for the first and the last time during our stay, gave a public audience at the palace gate. It was a scene for a painter. There sat the blind old tyrant, corpulent, decrepit, yet imposing, with his large broad forehead, white beard, and thoughtful air, clad in all the simplicity of a Wahnābee; the gold-hafted sword at his side his only ornament or distinction. Beside him the ministers, the officers of his court, and a crowd of the nobler and wealthier citizens. 'Abd-Allah,

the heir of the throne, was alone absent. Up came Sa'ood with the bearing of a hussar officer, richly clad in Cachemire shawls and a gold wrought mantle, while man by man followed his red dressed cavaliers, their spears over their shoulders, and their swords hanging down ; a musket too was slung behind the saddle of each warrior ; and the sharp dagger of Hareek glittered in every girdle. Next came the common soldiers on camels or dromedaries, some with spears only, some with spears and guns, till the wide square was filled with armed men and gazing spectators, as the whole troop drew up before the great autocrat, and Sa'ood alighted to bend and kiss his father's hand. "God save Feysul ! God give the victory to the armies of the Muslims !" was shouted out on every side, and all faces kindled into the fierce smile of concentrated enthusiasm and conscious strength. Feysul rose from his seat, and placed his son at his side. Another moment, and they entered the castle together, whilst the troops dispersed to their quarters, chiefly in the Khajik.

I have noticed that 'Abd-Allah did not appear. Much though he rejoiced at an event tending to forward his own aims, yet personal jealousy and hatred would not allow him to bear part in his brother's reception. Next day Feysul, while seated in his private divan with Sa'ood, enquired of him whether he had yet seen his elder brother, and, on his negative answer, ordered him to pay 'Abd-Allah the first visit. "I am the stranger guest, while he is an inhabitant of the town," replied Sa'ood, "and it is accordingly his duty to call first on me." Feysul urged his orders, but in vain ; Sa'ood persisted in refusal. The old king at last lost his wonted self-command, and, supported by two negro slaves, rose to strike his son. "Strike," said Sa'ood, bending his shoulders to receive the blow ; "you have me before you, but I will not go to my brother's house." The slaves now interfered, and Feysul, abashed at the indecorum of his own conduct, permitted Sa'ood to retire without further comment.

A few hours after, the blind monarch, mounted on a led horse, was seen traversing the street which conducts to the palace of 'Abd-Allah. Arrived there, he related what had just occurred, and entreated his son to fulfil the obligation of a first visit. But the elder son proved no less intractable than the younger, though less excusably. Finally, "It is all my fault, I have treated your brother ill," said Feysul ; "he was in the right, and we are in



the wrong. The error must be repaired somehow. Do you come along with me to the palace, and we will both together call on him in his lodgings; your visit will thus be coloured by mine, and matters will resume their proper course." 'Abd-Allah could no longer refuse; the customary ceremonies of politeness were exchanged between the brothers, and the dangers of a gross and public scandal so far avoided. But Maḥboob had been informed of all. "Do you now understand the true state of affairs?" said he to Feyṣul. "By God! you will hardly be in your grave when the clash of swords will be heard from 'Aareḍ to Sedeyr." Feyṣul sighed deeply; but what remedy where the rivalry of the mothers, inherited by the children, is heightened by the rivalry of a kingdom?

Sa'ood had not been three days in his new quarters within the palace, when a tall and handsome attendant came with extreme courtesy of demeanour to call me into the presence of his master, who, said he, was suffering from a toothache or a headache, I forget which, and required my professional help without delay. On entering the prince's apartments I was met by a hearty welcome in the good-humoured style customary to Sa'ood, and a loud laugh when I enquired after his ailment. "As well as yourself," he replied; "all I wanted was a pretext for having you here." He then entered freely into conversation, and expressed, or at least professed, much sympathy for Egypt. 'The fact is, that being a mortal enemy to 'Abd-Allah, and feeling the certainty of a not distant struggle, he would gladly seek support from a government whose feelings he can anticipate to be on the whole unfriendly to his ultra-Wahhābee brother. During the rest of my stay here he repeatedly sent for me, showed much good will, possibly sincere, under the idea that I was an emissary of Egypt, and thereby contributed to set 'Abd-Allah against me, in the manner which now remains to relate.

At first we have seen that everything went on very smoothly and even favourably with the heir-apparent. But time advanced, success provoked jealousy here and there, while closer observation awakened suspicions, till the fair sky began to overcloud, and there appeared indications of a gathering storm, enough to have put us on our guard had we been more cautious than, I regret to say, we were. Truth here obliges me to the recital of

more than one imprudence, for which I trust that my European readers will bear more indulgence than his royal highness at Ri'ad. I put down the circumstances in order to render clearer the cause and connection of events.

Thus, one evening 'Abd-Allah importuned me for a prophylactic against a toothache which from time to time gave him annoyance. I proposed one or two, but he did not approve them. At last I suggested that there yet remained one sovereign remedy, but that he must keep it a profound secret. "What is it?" eagerly enquired the prince. "It consists in tobacco, chewed and applied to the tooth, with a lighted pipe to promote its action," answered I. The Wahnabee said nothing, but his frown spoke much, and I felt I had gone too far.

Another time he wanted me to pay more regular and specific attention to his horse's ailments. For awhile I tried, but without use, to make him understand that a physician was one thing, and a veterinary surgeon another: the truth was, that I was seriously afraid of committing some real blunder with his mares and colts. But 'Abd-Allah would hear no excuse, till finally I cut matters short by saying, "Your highness will please to remember that here in your capital I am a doctor of asses, not of horses." He understood the hit, and was not over-pleased; then laughed a sour laugh, and changed the discourse.

But worse followed. One night we were at the palace, and 'Abd-Allah, as often, was for keeping me up till midnight, pestering me with medico-scientific enquiries, and exacting for himself a regular course of pharmaceutical lectures, but without the fees. I was sleepy and tired, and should much have preferred going home to bed. Desirous of bringing matters to a crisis, I now remained silent, and let his highness's questions go by without an answer. "What are you thinking of?" said he. After one or two evasive answers, I replied that I was thinking of a story regarding the Caliph Haroon-er-Rasheed and his well-known jester and boon companion Aboo-Nowas. 'Abd-Allah, who, like all Arabs, relished nothing so much as a story of kings and caliphs, eagerly enquired what the tale might be. So I informed him that the celebrated caliph had a bad habit of sitting up very late, and that he used to keep Aboo-Nowas for companion of his vigils at hours when the latter would willingly

have been at rest. One night Haroon was talking at a great pace, and Aboo-Nowas remained silent as though wrapped in thought. "What are you thinking about?" asked the caliph. "Of nothing," answered Aboo-Nowas, and relapsed into silence. A second time the same question was put, and met with the same reply. But on a third interrogation Aboo-Nowas raised his head, looked the majesty of Bagdad hard in the face, and said, "I am thinking of this" (the Arab word is, I regret to say, that most "unpleasing to a married ear," we will render it by) "brute, who will neither go himself to bed nor let me go."

'Abd-Allah stared, and hesitated a moment between anger and laughter. At last the latter prevailed. "You are at liberty," said he, and I took my leave.

By this time he was ripe for serious displeasure, and the Kaḍee 'Abd-el-Laṭeef, as I was afterwards informed, with some others of like strain, took the opportunity of putting his suspicions on the alert. The first intimation that we received was curious enough.

For a foreigner to enter Ri'ad is not always easy, but to get away from it is harder still; Reynard himself would have been justly shy of venturing on this royal cave. There exist in the capital of Nejed two approved means of barring the exit against those on whom mistrust may have fallen. The first and readiest is that of which it has been emphatically said, *Stone-dead hath no fellow*. But should circumstances render the bonds of death inexpedient, the bonds of Hymen and a Ri'ad establishment may and occasionally do supply their office. By this latter proceeding, the more amiable of the two, 'Abd-Allah resolved to enchain us.

Accordingly, one morning arrived at our dwelling an attendant of the palace, with a smiling face, presage of some good in reserve, and many fair speeches. After enquiries about our health, comfort, well-being, &c., he added that 'Abd-Allah thought we might be desirous of purchasing this or that, and begged us to accept of a small present. It was a fair sum of money, just twice so much as the ordinary token of good will, namely, four rials in place of two. After which the messenger took his leave. Aboo-'Eysa had been present at the interview: "Be on the look-out," said he, "there is something wrong."

That very afternoon 'Abd-Allah sent for me, and with abundance of encomiums and of promises, declared that he could not think of letting Ri'ad lose so valuable a physician, that I must accordingly take up a permanent abode in the capital, where I might rely on his patronage, and on all good things; that he had already resolved on giving me a house and a garden, specifying them, with a suitable household, and a fair face to keep me company; he concluded by inviting me to go without delay and see whether the new abode fitted me, and take possession.

Much and long did I fight off; talked about a winter visit to the coast, and coming back in the spring; tried first one pretext and then another; but none would avail, and 'Abd-Allah continued to insist. To quiet him, I consented to go and see the house. For the intended Calypso, I had ready an argument derived from Mahometan law, which put her out of the question, but its explanation would require more space than these pages can afford. Suffice that it was peremptory, and the "proposal" came to a premature end. However, the offered house and income remained behind. On these points 'Abd-Allah hoped to meet with a less efficacious resistance, and indeed I doubt if any legislation in the world can supply a valid pretext for declining a good salary. So he told one of his attendants to show me over the premises, and I for my part promised him a categorical answer next morning.

The house was really good, well situated, with a small garden adjoining, nor could any reasonable demur be made on its score. A real vagrant Arab physician would, in vulgar phrase, have snapped at the offer. But in the question was really "to be or not to be," and difficulties when they cannot be turned, must be faced.

On our ensuing meeting I told 'Abd-Allah that we were fully sensible of the honour done us, but that we had previously made all our engagements for going on to Ḥaṣa, that we could no longer break them, that a return to Ri'ad in the following spring might suffice, and that since 'Abd-Allah himself was to head in person the expedition against 'Oneyzah, we might well await his return before taking up our settled residence in the capital, where difficulties might possibly occur during his absence; in short, that we could not pass the winter in Nejed,



but that we hoped for a second and a longer visit next year. However palliated, the refusal could not but be disagreeable; 'Abd-Allah admitted it with evident reluctance and concealed mistrust.

The winter season was now setting in; it was the third week in November; and a thunder-storm, the first we had witnessed in Central Arabia, ushered in a marked change for cold in the temperature of Wadi Haneefah. Rain fell abundantly, and sent torrents down the dry watercourses of the valley, changing its large hollows into temporary tanks. None of the streams showed, however, any disposition to reach the sea, nor indeed could they, for this part of Nejed is entirely hemmed in to the east by the Toweḡ range. The inhabitants welcomed the copious showers, pledges of fertility for the coming year, while at 'Oneyzah the same rains produced at least one excellent effect, but which I may well defy my readers to guess. The hostile armies, commanded by Zāmil and Moḥammed-ebn-Sa'ood, were drawn up in face of each other, and on the point of fierce conflict, when the storm burst on them, and by putting out the lighted matchlocks of either party, prevented the discharge of bullets and the effusion of blood.

The affairs of the Nā'ib were nearly terminated, and Aboo-'Eysa had received his patents. We now prepared to start eastwards, but the day of our departure from Nejed was yet to fix, when a sudden explosion of royal ill-will put an end to our indecision, and necessitated more promptitude than we had hitherto intended for our movements.

In one of my medical cases, the nature of the malady had led me to try that powerful though dangerous therapeutic agent, strychnia; and its employment had been followed by prompt and unequivocal amelioration. Not that the amendment was, I should think, of a permanent character, but of this point the Nejdeans, who saw no farther than the present effect, were and could be no judges, while the high rank of the patient himself, an old town chief, drew special attention to the fact. Everybody talked about it, and the news reached the palace.

'Abd-Allah had just paid his compulsory visit to Sa'ood, and the mutual rivalry of the brothers, now the more exasperated by vicinity, was very thinly concealed, or rather not concealed, under the formalities of social politeness. Intrigues, treasons,

violence itself, were hatching beneath the palace walls, and assassination, whether by the dagger or the bowl, I had better said the coffee-cup, would have been quite in keeping, nor likely to cause the smallest surprise to any one. Maḥboob, too, always odious to 'Abd-Allah, was at this moment more so than ever, and the minister himself could not fail to foresee his own personal peril when time should place undivided and autocratic power in the hands of one whom he had so often browbeaten and kept in abeyance. Hence he sided with Sa'ood, and by so doing heated the furnace of 'Abd-Allah's evil passions one seven times more than it was wont to be heated. The nobles of the town, the very strangers, all sided with the one or the other of the half-brothers, and though Feysul's life, like the silken thread round the monsters in Triermain's "Hall of Fear," yet held the tigers back, it might not suffice to restrain some sudden and especially some secret spring.

Now 'Abd-Allah in the course of his amateur lectures had learnt enough to know the poisonous qualities of various drugs, and of strychnine in particular; and though probably unacquainted with the exploits of European criminals, was fully capable of giving them a rival in the East. The cure, or at least the relief, just alluded to, had occurred about the 16th of November, exactly at the time when I had given him to understand our definite refusal of his offers, and when he was in consequence somewhat uncertain what course next to follow. A day or two after he sent for me, expressed his regret at our resolution to quit the capital, and begged that we would at least leave behind us in his keeping some useful medicines for the public benefit, and above all that we would entrust him with that powerful drug whose sanitary effects were now the subject of general admiration.

All that I could say about the uselessness, nay, the great danger, of pharmacy in unlearned hands, was rejected as a mere and insufficient pretext. At last, after much urging, the prince ended by saying that for the other ingredients I might omit them if I chose, but that the strychnine he must have, and that though at the highest price I might fancy to name.

His real object was perfectly clear, nor could I dream of lending a hand, however indirect, to his diabolical designs, nor did I see any way open before me but that of a firm though

polite denial. In pursuance, I affected not to suspect his projects, and insisted on the dangerous character of the alkaloid, till he gave up the charge for the moment, and I left the palace.

Next day he renewed his demands, but to no purpose. A third meeting took place; it was the 19th or 20th of the month. Beckoning me to his side, he insisted in the most absolute manner on having the poison in his possession, and at last, laying aside all pretences, made clear the reasons, though not the person for whom he desired it, and declared that he would admit of no excuse, conscientious or otherwise.

He was at the moment sitting in the further end of the K'hawah, and I was close by him; while between us and the attendants there present, enough space remained to prevent their catching our conversation, if held in an undertone. I looked round to assure myself that we could not be overheard, and when a flat denial on my part had been met by an equally flat rejection and a fresh demand, I turned right towards him, lifted up the edge of his head-dress, and said in his ear, "'Abd-Allah, I know well what you want the poison for, and I have no mind to be an accomplice in your crimes. You shall *never* have it."

His face became literally black and swelled with rage; I never saw so perfect a demon before or after. A moment he hesitated in silence, then mastered himself, and suddenly changing voice and tone began to talk gaily about indifferent subjects. After a few minutes he rose, and I returned home.

There Aboo'Eysa, Barakāt, and myself immediately held council to consider what was now to be done. That an outbreak must shortly take place seemed certain; to await it was dangerous, yet we could not safely leave the town in an over-precipitate manner, nor without some kind of permission. We resolved together to go on in quiet and caution a few days more, to sound the court, make our adieus at Feyṣul's palace, get a good word from Maḥboob (no difficult matter), and then slip off without attracting too much notice. But our destiny was not to run so smoothly.

On the evening of the 21st we were sitting up late, talking over the needful preparations of the journey, and drinking coffee with a few good-natured townsmen, who had no objection to a

contraband smoke ; a practice for which our dwelling had long since become famous or infamous, when a rap at the door announced 'Abd-Allah—not the prince, but his namesake and confidential retainer. "What brings you here at this hour of the night?" said we, not overpleased at the honour of his visit.

"The king" (for such is in common Ri'ad parlance the title given to the heir-apparent) "sends for you; come with me at once," was his short and sharp answer. "Shall Barakāt come with me?" said I, looking towards my companion. "The king wants you alone," replied the messenger. "Shall I bring one of my books along with me?" "There is no need." "Wait a few minutes while we get a cup of coffee ready for you."

This last offer could not in common decency be refused. While the ceremony was in performance, I found time to exchange a few words with Aboo-Eysa and Barakāt. They agreed to dismiss the guests, and to remain on the alert for the result of this nocturnal embassy, easily foreseen to be a threatening one, perhaps dangerous. Yet the fact of my companion's not being also sent for, seemed to me a guarantee against immediate peril.

The royal messenger and myself then left the house, and proceeded in silence and darkness through the winding streets to the palace of 'Abd-Allah. Arrived there, a short parley ensued between my conductor and the guards, who then resumed their post, while the former passed on to give the prince notice, leaving me to cool myself for a minute or two in the night air of the courtyard. A negro then came out, and beckoned me to enter.

The room was dark, there was no other light than that afforded by the flickering gleams of the firewood burning on the hearth. At the further end sat 'Abd-Allah, silent and gloomy; opposite to him on the other side was 'Abd-el-Laṭeef, the successor of the Wahnābee, and a few others, Zelators, or belonging to their party. Maḥboob was seated by 'Abd-el-Laṭeef, and his presence was the only favourable circumstance discernible at a first glance. But he too looked unusually serious. At the other end of the long hall were a dozen armed attendants, Nejdeans or negroes.

When I entered, all remained without movement or return



of greeting. I saluted 'Abd-Allah, who replied in an undertone, and gave me a signal to sit down at a little distance from him but on the same side of the divan. My readers may suppose that I was not at the moment ambitious of too intimate a vicinity.

After an interval of silence, 'Abd-Allah turned half round towards me, and with his blackest look and a deep voice said, "I now know perfectly well what you are; you are no doctors, you are Christians, spies, and revolutionists ('mufsideen') come hither to ruin our religion and state in behalf of those who sent you. The penalty for such as you is death, that you know, and I am determined to inflict it without delay."

"Threatened folks live long," thought I, and had no difficulty in showing the calm which I really felt. So looking him coolly in the face, I replied, "Istaghfir Allah," literally, "Ask pardon of God." This is the phrase commonly addressed to one who has said something extremely out of place.

The answer was unexpected; he started, and said, "Why so?"

"Because," I rejoined, "you have just now uttered a sheer absurdity. 'Christians,' be it so; but 'spies,' 'revolutionists,'—as if we were not known by everybody in your town for quiet doctors, neither more nor less! And then to talk about putting me to death! You cannot, and you dare not."

"But I can and dare," answered 'Abd-Allah, "and who shall prevent me? you shall soon learn that to your cost."

"Neither can nor dare," repeated I. "We are here your father's guests and yours for a month and more, known as such, received as such. What have we done to justify a breach of the laws of hospitality in Nejed? It is impossible for you to do what you say," continued I, thinking the while that it was a great deal too possible after all; "the obloquy of the deed would be too much for you."

He remained a moment thoughtful, then said, "As if any one need know who did it. I have the means, and can dispose of you without talk or rumour. Those who are at my bidding can take a suitable time and place for that, without my name being ever mentioned in the affair."

The advantage was now evidently on my side; I followed it up, and said with a quiet laugh, "Neither is that within your power. Am I not known to your father, to all in his palace? to

your own brother Sa'ood among the rest? Is not the fact of this my actual visit to you known without your gates? Or is there no one here?" added I, with a glance at Maḥboob, "who can report elsewhere what you have just now said? Better for you to leave off this nonsense; do you take me for a child of four days old?"

He muttered a repetition of his threat. "Bear witness, all here present," said I, raising my voice so as to be heard from one end of the room to the other, "that if any mishap befalls my companion or myself from Ri'ad to the shores of the Persian Gulf, it is all 'Abd-Allah's doing. And the consequences shall be on his head, worse consequences than he expects or dreams."

The prince made no reply. All were silent; Maḥboob kept his eyes steadily fixed on the fireplace; 'Abd-el-Laṭeef looked much and said nothing.

"Bring coffee," called out 'Abd-Allah to the servants. Before a minute had elapsed, a black slave approached with one and only one coffee-cup in his hand. At a second sign from his master he came before me and presented it.

Of course the worst might be conjectured of so unusual and solitary a draught. But I thought it highly improbable that matters should have been so accurately prepared; besides, his main cause of anger was precisely the refusal of poisons, a fact which implied that he had none by him ready for use. So I said, "Bismillah," took the cup, looked very hard at 'Abd-Allah, drank it off, and then said to the slave, "Pour me out a second." This he did; I swallowed it, and said, "Now you may take the cup away."

The desired effect was fully attained. 'Abd-Allah's face announced defeat, while the rest of the assembly whispered together. The prince turned to 'Abd-el-Laṭeef and began talking about the dangers to which the land was exposed from spies, and the wicked designs of infidels for ruining the kingdom of the Muslims. The Kaḍee and his companions chimed in, and the story of a pseudo-Darweesh traveller killed at Derey-eeyah, and of another (but who he was I cannot fancy; perhaps a Persian, who had, said 'Abd-Allah, been also recognized for an intriguer, but had escaped to Mascat, and thus baffled the penalty due to his crimes), were now brought forward and commented on. Maḥboob now at last spoke, but it was to

ridicule such apprehensions. "The thing is in itself unlikely," said he, "and were it so, what harm could they do?" alluding to my companion and myself.

On this I took up the word, and a general conversation ensued, in which I did my best to explode the idea of spies and spymanship, appealed to our own quiet and inoffensive conduct, got into a virtuous indignation against such a requital of evil for good after all the services which we had rendered court and town, and quoted verses of the Coran regarding the wickedness of ungrounded suspicion, and the obligation of not judging ill without clear evidence. 'Abd-Allah made no direct answer, and the others, whatever they may have thought, could not support a charge abandoned by their master.

What amused me not a little was that the Wakhābee prince had after all very nearly hit the right nail on the head, and that I was snubbing him only for having guessed too well. But there was no help for it, and I had the pleasure of seeing, that though at heart unchanged in his opinion about us, he was yet sufficiently cowed to render a respite certain, and our escape thereby practicable.

This kind of talk continued awhile, and I purposely kept my seat, to show the unconcern of innocence, till Mahboob made me a sign that I might safely retire. On this I took leave of 'Abd-Allah and quitted the palace unaccompanied. It was now near midnight, not a light to be seen in the houses, not a sound to be heard in the streets, the sky too was dark and overcast, till, for the first time, a feeling of lonely dread came over me, and I confess that more than once I turned my head to look and see if no one was following with "evil," as Arabs say, in his hand. But there was none, and I reached the quiet alley and low door where a gleam through the chinks announced the anxious watch of my companions, who now opened the entrance, overjoyed at seeing me back sound and safe from so critical a parley.

Our plan for the future was soon formed. A day or two we were yet to remain in Ri'ad, lest haste should seem to imply fear, and thereby encourage pursuit. But during that period we would avoid the palace, out-walks in gardens or after night-fall, and keep at home as much as possible. Meanwhile Aboo-'Eysa was to get his dromedaries ready, and put them in

a courtyard immediately adjoining the house, to be laden at a moment's notice.

A band of travellers was to leave Ri'ad for Ḥaṣa a few days later. Aboo'Eysa gave out publicly that he would accompany them to Hofhoof, while we were supposed to intend following the northern or Sedeyr track, by which the Nā'ib, after many reciprocal farewells and assurances of lasting friendship, should wé ever meet again, had lately departed. Mobeyreek, a black servant in Aboo'Eysa's pay, occupied himself diligently in feeding up the camels for their long march with clover and vetches, both abundant here; and we continued our medical avocations, but quietly, and without much leaving the house. At the palace all were busy about the departure of the Hareek contingent, which now set out on its 'Oneyzah way by Shaḡra', but marched, contrary to expectation, without 'Abd-Allah, that prince reserving himself for the arrival of the artillery, which was daily expected from Ḥaṣa, under the charge of Moḥammed es-Sedeyree. Amid all this movement and bustle no particular enquiry was made after us; the tempest had been followed by a lull, and it was ours to take advantage of this interval before a new and a worse outburst.

During the afternoon of the 24th we brought three of Aboo'Eysa's camels into our courtyard, shut the outer door, packed and laded. We then awaited the moment of evening prayer; it came, and the voice of the Mu'eddineen summoned all good Wahhābees, the men of the town-guard not excepted, to the different mosques. When about ten minutes had gone by, and all might be supposed at their prayers, we opened our door. Mobeyreek gave a glance up and down the street to ascertain that no one was in sight, and we led out the camels. Aboo'Eysa accompanied us. Avoiding the larger thoroughfares, we took our way by bye-lanes and side passages towards a small town-gate, the nearest to our house, and opening on the north. A late comer fell in with us on his way to the Mesjid, and as he passed summoned us also to the public service. But Aboo'Eysa unhesitatingly replied, "We have this moment come from prayers," and our interlocutor, fearing to be himself too late and thus to fall under reprehension and punishment, rushed off to the nearest oratory, leaving the road clear. Nobody was in watch at the gate. We crossed its threshold, turned south-east,



and under the rapid twilight reached a range of small hillocks, behind which we sheltered ourselves till the stars came out, and the "wing of night," to quote Arab poets, spread black over town and country.

We drew a long breath, like men just let out of a dungeon, and thanked heaven that this much was over. Then, after the first hour of night had gone over, and chance passers-by had ceased, and left us free from challenge and answer, we lighted our camp-fire, drank a most refreshing cup of coffee, set our pipes to work, and laughed in our turn at 'Abd-Allah and Feysul.

So far so good. But further difficulties remained before us. It was now more than ever absolutely essential to get clear of Nejed unobserved, to put the desert between us and the Wahnabee court and capital; and no less necessary was it that Aboo-'Eysa, so closely connected as he was with Ri'ad and its government, should seem nohow implicated in our unceremonious departure, nor any way concerned with our onward movements. In a word, an apparent separation of paths between him and us was necessary, before we could again come together and complete the remainder of our explorations.

In order to manage this, and while ensuring our own safety to throw a little dust in Wahnabee eyes, it was agreed that before next morning's sunrise Aboo-'Eysa should return to the town, and to his dwelling, as though nothing had occurred, and should there await the departure of the great merchant caravan, mentioned previously, and composed mainly of men from Ḥaṣa and Ḳaṭeef, now bound for Hofhoof under the guidance of Aboo-Dahir-el-Ghannām. This assemblage was expected to start within three days at latest. Meanwhile our friend should take care to show himself openly in the palaces of Feysul and 'Abd-Allah, and if asked about us should answer vaguely, with the off-hand air of one who had no further care regarding us. We ourselves should in the interim make the best of our way, with Mobeyreek for guide, to Wadi Soley', and there remain concealed in a given spot, till Aboo-'Eysa should come and pick us up.

All this was arranged; at break of dawn Aboo-'Eysa took his leave, and Barakāt, Mobeyreek, and myself, were once more high perched on our dromedaries, their heads turned to the

south-east, keeping the hillock range between us and Ri'ad, which we saw no more. Our path led us over low undulating ground, a continuation of Wadi Haneefah, till after about four hours' march we were before the gates of Manfooḥah, a considerable town, surrounded by gardens nothing inferior in extent and fertility to those of Ri'ad; but its fortifications, once strong, have long since been dismantled and broken down by the jealousy of the neighbouring capital. In point of climate this town is preferable to Ri'ad, because situated on higher ground, and above the damp mists which often gather in the depths of the Wadi; but in a military view it is inferior to the capital, because in a more exposed and less easily guarded position. Passing Manfooḥah without entering it, our road dipped down again, and we found ourselves in Wadi Soley', a long valley, originating in the desert between Hareek and Yemamah, and running far to the north.

After winding here and there, we reached the spot assigned by Aboo'Eysa for our hiding-place. It was a small sandy depth, lying some way off the beaten track, amid hillocks and brushwood, and without water: of this latter article we had taken enough in the goat-skins to last us for three days. Here we halted, and made up our minds to patience and expectation.

Two days passed drearily enough. We could not but long for our guide's arrival, nor be wholly without fear on more than one score. Once or twice a stray peasant stumbled on us, and was much surprised at our encampment in so droughty a locality. Sometimes leaving our dromedaries crouching down, and concealed among the shrubs, we wandered up the valley, climbed the high chalky cliffs of Toweik, to gain a distant glimpse of the blue sierra of Hareek in the far south, and the white ranges of Toweik north and east. Or we dodged the numerous nor over-shy herds of gazelles, not for any desire of catching them, but simply to pass the time, and distract the mind weary of conjecture. So the hours went by, till the third day brought closer expectation and anxiety, still increasing while the sun declined, and at last went down; yet nobody appeared. But just as darkness closed in, and we were sitting in a dispirited group beside our little fire, for the night air blew chill, Aboo'Eysa came suddenly up, and all was changed for question and answer, for cheerfulness and laughter.

He now related, amid many jokes and congratulations, how on the very day he had left us, he had called on 'Abd-Allah, and to his question, "What is become of those two Christians?" had answered by a gratuitous supposition of our being somewhere on the road to Zobeyr; how Maḥboob had also enquired after us, and met with a similar answer; how comments had been passed on us, some favourable, others unfavourable; what wild suppositions had circulated concerning our origin and our purposes; how some had opined us to be envoys from Constantinople, and some from Egypt (good luck that no one hit on Europe), with much of like tenor, now matter of mirth. Dahir-el-Ghannām was halting a little farther on with his band; we were to join them next morning.

Early on November 28th we resumed our march through a light valley-mist, and soon fell in with our companions of the road. They were numerous, but I spare my reader a minute description, since they presented nothing very different from what we have already met.

The first day led us out of Wadi Soley'. We traversed the outskirting plantations of Salemee'yah, a large fortified village. Here is the ordinary abode of Sa'ood, our former friend, and second son of Feysul, when not absent, which is often the case, in Hooṭah and the Hareek. The country around is the most fertile of the Yemāmah, and the paradise of Nejed; but the vegetation, trees, or plants, differ little from that of Wadi Ḥaneeefah, except in greater continuity of extent and depth of green. Cotton alone by its frequency forms an exception to the uniformity of palm-groves, maize, and millet, more than elsewhere.

Much to my regret, our caravan passed on without halting, and soon after, turning a little to the north, we entered a long gorge cleft in the limestone wall of Toweyk, and mounted for about three hundred feet till we came on a high broad steppe, where a scanty pasturage, just enough to brown the chalky soil here and there, maintained a few herds of sheep-like goats, or goat-like sheep; while the dreary ascents and descents reminded me of scenes in Scotland, save that fir and pine were here wanting. We were long in traversing this waste, until towards evening we came on a patch of greener soil, and a cluster of

wells, the Laḳey'yāt by name, and here we encamped for a very cold night.

Next morning the whole country, hill and dale, trees and bushes, was wrapped in a thick blanket of mist, fitter for Surrey than for Arabia. So dense was the milky fog, that we fairly lost our way, and went on at random, shouting and hallooing, driving our beasts now here, now there, over broken ground and amid tangling shrubs, till the sun gained strength, and the vapour cleared off, showing us the path at some distance on our right. Before we had followed it far, we saw a black mass advancing from the east to meet us. It was the first division of the Ḥaṣa troops on their way to Ri'ad; they were not less than four or five hundred in number. Like true Arabs, they marched with a noble contempt of order and discipline—walking, galloping, ambling, singing, shouting, alone or in bands, as fancy led. We interchanged a few words of greeting with these brisk boys, who avowed, without hesitation or shame, that they should much have preferred to stay at home, and that enforced necessity, not any military or religious ardour, was taking them to the field. We laughed, and wished them Zāmil's head, or him theirs, whereon they laughed also, shouted, and passed on.

Whilst hereabouts, we caught a magnificent southward view of the Ḥareek, to which we were now opposite, though separated from it by a streak of desert. Its hills lie east and west in a ragged and isolated chain, which was apparently sixty miles or more in length. Thus girdled by the desert, Ḥareek must needs be a very hot district; indeed, its name (literally, "burning") implies no less, and the dusky tint of its inhabitants confirms the fact. We could not at such a distance distinguish any towns or castles in particular; only the situation of the capital, Ḥooṭah, was pointed out to us by the knowing ones of our band. It was curious also to see how suddenly, almost abruptly, Djebel Ṭoweyk ended in the desert, going down in a rapid series of precipitous steps, the last of which plunges sheer into the waste of sand. Ṭoweyk is here mainly limestone, but in some spots iron-ore is to be found, in some copper; Aboo-'Eysa pointed out to us a hill, the appearance of which promised the latter metal, with the remark that Europeans, were they here, would make good use of it.



On we went, but through a country of much more varied scenery than what we had traversed the day before, enjoying the "pleasure situate in hill and dale," till we arrived at the foot of a high white cliff, almost like that of Dover; but these crags, instead of having the sea at their foot, overlooked a wide valley full of trees, and bearing traces of many violent winter torrents from east to west; none were now flowing. Here we halted and passed an indifferent night, much annoyed by "chill November's surly blast," hardly less ungenial here than on the banks of Ayr, though sweeping over a latitude of  $25^{\circ}$ , not  $56^{\circ}$ .

Before the starlight had faded from the cold morning sky, we were up and in movement, for a long march was before us. After a little parleying, so to speak, with the mountain, we climbed it by a steep winding path, hard of ascent to the camels, of whom Arabs report that when asked which they like best, going up hill or going down, they answer, "A curse light on them both." At sunrise we stood on the last and here the highest ledge of Toweşk, that long chalky wall which bounds and backs up Nejed on the east; beyond is the desert, and then the coast. The view now opened to us was very extensive, and the keen air made all the more sensible our elevation above the far-off plains, that hence showed like a faintly-ribbed sea-surface to the west. Neither man nor beast, tree nor shrub, appeared around; marl and pebbles formed the plateau, all dry and dreary under a cold wind and a hot sun.

After about three hours of level route we began to descend, not rapidly, but by degrees, and at noon we reached a singular depression, a huge natural basin, hollowed out in the limestone rock, with tracks resembling deep trenches leading to it from every side. At the bottom of this crater-like valley were a dozen or more wells, so abundant in their supply that they not unfrequently overflow the whole space and form a small lake; the water is clear and good, but no other is to be met with on the entire line hence to Hāṣa. At these wells (whose geographical position has earned them the name of Oweysiṭ, the diminutive of Owseṭ, or centre) meet several converging roads; the last being the eastward path, leading to Hāṣa and Hofhoof, by which we were now to travel. All the flocks and herds of the adjoining mountain region resort hither to drink.

We now rested awhile, prepared a cup of coffee, filled our

water-skins almost to bursting, and then with the briskness of men who have made up their minds to a hard pull, remounted our dromedaries and emerged from the crater by its eastern outlet. For the rest of the day we continued steadily to descend the broad even slope, whose extreme barrenness and inanimate monotony reminded me of the pebbly uplands near Ma'ān on the opposite side of the Peninsula, traversed by us exactly seven months before. The sun set, night came on, and many of the travellers would gladly have halted, but Aboo-'Eysa insisted on continuing the march. We were now many hundred feet lower than the crest behind us, and the air felt warm and heavy, when we noticed that the ground, hitherto hard beneath our feet, was changing step by step into a light sand that seemed to encroach on the rocky soil. It was at first a shallow ripple, then deepened, and before long presented the well-known ridges and undulations characteristic of the land ocean when several fathoms in depth. Our beasts ploughed laboriously on through the yielding surface; the night was dark, but starry; and we could just discern amid the shade a white glimmer of spectral sand-hills rising around us on every side, but no track or indication of a route.

It was the great Dahnā, or "Red Desert," the bugbear of even the wandering Bedouin, and never traversed by ordinary wayfarers without an apprehension which has too often been justified by fatal incidents. So light are the sands, so capricious the breezes that shape and reshape them daily into unstable hills and valleys, that no traces of preceding travellers remain to those who follow; while intense heat and glaring light reflected on all sides combine with drought and weariness to confuse and bewilder the adventurer, till he loses his compass and wanders up and down at random amid a waste solitude which soon becomes his grave. Many have thus perished; even whole caravans have been known to disappear in the Dahnā without a vestige; till the wild Arab tales of demons carrying off wanderers, or ghouls devouring them, obtain a half credit among many accustomed elsewhere to laugh at such fictions. However, will they, nill they, merchants, travellers, messengers, armies—in a word, all who pass to and fro between the populous Ḥaṣa and the imperial Nejed—must cross this desert, and that by one especial line, for in all other directions the Dahnā is, with

hardly any exception, impracticable. On either side, indeed, of this sand-river, the roads are clearly indicated nor liable to mistake; the whole difficulty consists in the intermediate space. To lessen its risks, Aboo-'Eysa, with a degree of public spirit very rare in the East, had two years before laden several camels with a prodigious quantity of large stones, which he had thus conveyed midway across the sands, and there piled them up in what Arabs call a "Rejm," namely, a stone-heap, or rough pyramid, between twenty-five and thirty feet high, forming a most desirable landmark in the pathless desert. The changes effected in the sand by winds and tempests are seldom enough to overwhelm so large a pile; and should it even be covered up for a day or two, a second gale soon blows the light mantle off again from the stony nucleus. Many a blessing had been bestowed on Aboo-'Eysa for his Rejm, and much aid had been thereby afforded to travellers. Better still, Aboo-Ḍahir-el-Ghannām, the same in whose company we now were, and whose business often obliged him to cross this dreary space, had been seized by an honourable emulation, and had constructed a second stone-heap farther on, known by the name of Rejmat-el-Ghannām, as the former by that of Rejmat Abee-'Eysa. But, in spite of these rude direction-posts, the way of the Dahnā continues always a hazardous one, and our own caravan was not far from adding another page to the long chapter of accidents.

For, after about three hours of night travelling, or rather wading, among the sand-waves, till men and beasts alike were ready to sink for weariness, a sharp altercation arose between Aboo-'Eysa and El-Ghannām, each proposing a different direction of march. We all halted a moment, and raised our eyes heavy with drowsiness and fatigue, as if to see which of the contending parties was in the right. It will be long before I forget the impression of that moment. Above us was the deep black sky, spangled with huge stars of a brilliancy denied to all but an Arab gaze, while what is elsewhere a ray of the third magnitude becomes here of the first amid the pure vacuum of a mistless, vapourless air; around us loomed high ridges, shutting us in before and behind with their white ghost-like outlines; below our feet the lifeless sand, and everywhere a silence that seemed to belong to some strange and dreamy world where man might not venture. Aboo-'Eysa stretched his arm to point



out one way, El-Ghannām another, and either direction appeared equally devoid of pass or outlet. After awhile, however, Aboo-'Eysa cut the matter short by raising his voice, shouting to all to follow him, and, spite of the resistance which Ghannām persisted in making, led us all off at a sharp angle on the left, till at last we floundered down into a sort of valley where a few bushes diversified the sand, and dismounted for a few hours of repose; warmer at any rate than that of the preceding night.

Next morning we resumed our course, but now under the sole guidance of Aboo-'Eysa, to whom our band, confiding in his superior conversance with this wild region, had unanimously agreed to entrust themselves till we should reach the opposite bank. How our leader contrived to direct his steps would be hard to tell; the faculty of keeping one's nose in the right direction when neither eyes nor ears can afford any assistance, is, I suppose, one of the many latent powers of human nature, only to be brought out by circumstance and long exercise. When not far from the midmost of the Dahnā, we fell in with a few Bedouins, belonging to the Aāl-Morraḥ clan, sole tenants of this desert; they were leading their goats to little spots of scattered herbage and shrubs which here and there fix a precarious existence in the hollows of the sands. The flocks themselves can, by special privilege of endurance, pass four or five days at a time without watering; and when at last even they must drink, their shepherds conduct them to the Oweysiṭ or some other brackish well on the verge of Toweyk, unknown to ordinary mortals. More savage-looking beings than these Aāl-Morraḥ Bedouins I never saw; their hair was elf-locks, their dress rags, their complexion grime, their look wildness personified. But in speech, that distinctive countersign of the human animal, they proved themselves not only men, but men of eloquence also. The Aāl-Morraḥ are a very widely spread tribe; a small portion of them only acknowledge the Wāhhābee influence by an occasional tribute and a mangled prayer; the greater number pass for sheer infidels, and in general bearing much resemble our old friends the Sherarat, as they figure in the first chapter of this work. Their duskiness verges almost on blackness; their weapons spears and knives, for the musket has made little progress among them. Eloquence alone remains to them of all the heritage of Ḳaḥṭān; in other respects they



are mere savages, but not barbarous; I found them even good-natured, though impudent and predatory, like all their Bedouin brethren.

Theirs is the great desert from Nejed to Ḥaḍramaut. Not that they actually cover this immense space, a good fourth of the Peninsula; but that they have the free and undisputed range of the oases which it occasionally offers, where herbs, shrubs, and dwarf-palms cluster round some well of scant and briny water. These oases are sufficiently numerous to preserve a stray Bedouin or two from perishing, though not enough so to become landmarks for any regular route across the central Dahnā, from the main body of which runs out the long and broad arm which we were now traversing.

From our Aāl-Morrah friends Aboo-'Eysa now took indications for the way we had to follow, and thus procured us five minutes of standing still, but without alighting from our camels. About an hour after, we came in sight of his Rejm, the work of so much labour and cost. Reassured by its eloquent silence that we were certainly on the right track, we hastened on, very weary from the intense heat, yet unwilling to halt in this region of danger. When the afternoon was somewhat advanced, we saw coming up from the east, and not far on our left, what seemed a troop of black ants; it approached, and we discerned in it the main army of Ḥaṣa, slowly dragging along with them through the sands two heavy guns sent from Ḳaṭeef for the siege of 'Oneyzah.

After sunset we reached the second cairn, Rejmat-el-Ghannām. Here the desert-scene began to change; the sands were henceforth mixed with gravel, and gave firmer footing to our beasts. We alighted for supper; I might entitle it breakfast, for we had taken nothing all day. Every one rejoiced at our leaving the Dahnā in our rear. But the success of Aboo-'Eysa, who had piloted the caravan better than their original leader, aroused in the breast of El-Ghannām and his partisans the feeling which "does merit as its shade pursue," and nowhere more than in Arabia. Hence an open rupture now took place between the rival chiefs, and as the rest of the way was easy to find, Ghannām could all the better afford the quarrel. Some travellers sided with the one, some with the other; high words were interchanged, and we seemed on the point of having a

regular "Yowm" or "day," as Arabs term a fight. Whereon Barakāt and I interposed, by suggesting to Aboo-'Eysa that he had best push on with us and whoever else might choose to follow, and by arriving the first at Hofhoof complete his triumph over El-Ghannām. *Detto, fatto*, and off we started with two or three in our suite, leaving our mortified competitors to their coffee and humiliation.

The ground, for it now deserved that name, being about equal parts of pebble, marl, and sand, sloped down to the east, and glistened to the far horizon in barren whiteness, interrupted here and there by dark streaks of low and thorny thicket. Sheltered by one of these clusters, we snatched a few hours of brief rest, followed by another day of most monotonous plain, in level and character just like that of the preceding evening. A few travellers whom we met coming up from Djoon in Ḥaṣa, and who took us for robbers and almost died of fear, so fierce did we look, made the sole variety for fourteen hours of road. Villages, shade, and wells, of course there were none; fortunately the heat was much more supportable here than it had been amid the sand.

Another night's bivouac, and then again over the white down-sloping plain. At last a change ensued, abruptly chalky hills and narrow gorges bounded our way, till at the bottom of a hollow we came on a large solitary tree with more thorns than leaves, and in hermit loneliness. "Here," said Aboo-'Eysa, "Ibraheem Basha caused a well to be sunk for at least sixty feet in depth, in hopes of finding water, but to no purpose." The dry pit, now half filled up with stones and sand, remained a witness of the attempt. Had it succeeded, the difficulty of the communications between Nejed and the eastern coast would have been much alleviated.

A little farther on we entered the great valley, known by the name of Wadi Farook, which, like all other leading geographical features of this region, whether mountain or plain, runs from north to south; its general type resembles the Dahnā, of which it is in a manner a parallel offshoot. We descended into this valley about noon, crossed it not altogether without anxiety, and near sunset climbed the opposite bank, and began to thread the coast-range of Ḥaṣa. These hills attain, after my very rough observations, about fourteen hundred feet above the sea-

level, and about four hundred above the desert on the west, which would thus be itself about a thousand feet higher than the coast. Their sides are often eaten out into caverns, and their whole look is fanciful and desolate in the extreme.

It was now three days and a half since our last supply of water, and Aboo-'Eysa was anxious to reach the journey's end without delay. Similar reasons had acted no less powerfully on El-Ghannām and his companions, who by dint of forced marches here overtook us; we all made peace, and pushed on together over hills that shone like gold in the rich mellow rays of the setting sun. As darkness closed around we reached the furthest heights. Hence we overlooked the plains of Ḥaṣa, but could distinguish nothing through the deceptive rays of the rising moon; we seemed to gaze into a vast milky ocean. After an hour's halt for supper, we wandered on, now up, now down, over pass and crag, till a long corkscrew descent down the precipitous sea-side of the mountain for a thousand feet or near it, placed us fairly upon the low level of Ḥaṣa, and within the warm damp air of the sea-coast.

The ground glimmered white to the moon, and gave a firm footing to our dromedaries, who by their renewed agility seemed to partake in the joy of their riders, and to understand that rest was near. We were, in fact, all so eager to find ourselves at home and homestead, that although the town of Hofhoof, our destined goal, was yet full fifteen miles to the north-east, we pressed on for the capital. And there, in fact, we should have all arrived in a body before day-dawn, had not a singular occurrence retarded by far the greater number of our companions.

Soon after, the crags in our rear had shut out, perhaps for years, perhaps for ever, the desert and Central Arabia from our view, while before and around us lay the indistinct undulations and uncertain breaks of the great Ḥaṣa plain, when on a sloping bank at a short distance in front we discerned certain large black patches, in strong contrast with the white glister of the soil around, and at the same time our attention was attracted by a strange whizzing like that of a flight of hornets, close along the ground, while our dromedaries capered and started as though struck with sudden insanity. The cause of all this was a vast swarm of locusts, here alighted in their northerly wanderings from their birthplace in the Dahnā; their camp extended far

and wide, and we had already disturbed their outposts. These insects are wont to settle on the ground after sunset, and there, half stupefied by the night chill, to await the morning rays, which warm them once more into life and movement. This time our dromedaries did the work of the sun, and it would be hard to say which of the two were the most frightened, they or the locusts. It was truly laughable to see so huge a beast lose his wits for fear at the flight of a harmless, stingless insect; of all timid creatures none equal the "ship of the desert" for cowardice.

But if the beasts were frightened, not so their masters; I really thought they would have gone mad for joy. Locusts are here an article of food, nay, a dainty, and a good swarm of them is begged of Heaven in Arabia no less fervently than it would be deprecated in India or in Syria. This difference of sentiment is grounded on several reasons; a main one lies in the diversity of the insects themselves. The locust of Inner Arabia is very unlike whatever of the same genus I have seen elsewhere. Those of the north are small, of a pale green colour, and resemble not a little our own ordinary grasshoppers. They are never, to my knowledge, eaten by the Bedouins or villagers of Syria, Mesopotamia, and 'Irāk, nor do I believe them eatable under any circumstances, extreme hunger perhaps alone excepted. Like bees, they have a queen, whose size is proportioned to her majesty; but, like bees in this point also, locust queens do not lead the swarms, but keep retired state. The locust of Arabia is, on the contrary, a reddish-brown insect, twice or three times the size of its northern homonym, resembling a large prawn in appearance, and as long as a man's little finger, which it equals also in thickness. Among these locusts I neither saw nor heard of any queen, a deficit which tends to class them with the species "Arbah" of the Bible, as described in the penultimate chapter of the Proverbs. When boiled or fried they are said to be delicious, and boiled and fried accordingly they are to an incredible extent. However, I could never persuade myself to taste them, whatever invitations the inhabitants of the land, smacking their lips over large dishes full of entomological "délicatesses" could make me to join them. Barakāt ventured on one, and one only, for a trial; he



pronounced it oily and disgusting; it is caviare to unaccustomed palates.

The swarm now before us was a thorough godsend for our Arabs, on no account to be neglected. Thirst, weariness, all was forgotten, and down the riders leapt from their starting camels; this one spread out a cloak, that one a saddle-bag, a third his shirt, over the unlucky creatures destined for the morrow's meal. Some flew away whirring across our feet, others were caught and tied up in cloths and sacks; Cornish wreckers at work about a shattered East-Indiaman would be beaten by Ghannām and his companions with the locusts. However, Barakāt and myself felt no special interest in the chase, nor had we much desire to turn our dress and accoutrements into receptacles for living game. Luckily Aboo'Eysa still retained enough of his North Syrian education to be of our mind also. Accordingly we left our associates hard at work, turned our startled and still unruly dromedaries in the direction of Hofhoof, and set off full speed over the plain.

Thirteen or fourteen miles we rode on together, and passed the little village of 'Eyn-Nejm, or Fountain of the Star, where the shadows of its houses darkened the moonshine on the white cliffs under Ghoweyr. Here was not long since a hot and sulphurous spring, in popular belief, a panacea for all ruined constitutions. An open cupola had been erected by former generations over the source, and bath receptacles constructed around. Hither crowds repaired, and often found the health they sought, till the place became a point of resort and meeting for all around, and attracted the suspicious attention of the Ri'aḍ government. Order was given in consequence, about three years before the date of our visit, to destroy the cupola and the baths, and to choke up the mouth of the fountain with stones, lest, to quote the words of Feyṣul's orthodox firman, "the people should learn to put their trust in the waters rather than in God, which would be idolatry." The imperial decree was executed, and the ruins of the "Ḳubbah" or dome, with the hot stream that yet escapes from between the piles of rubbish, remain to attest the bounty of the Creator, the stupid narrow-mindedness of the Wahnābee, and the ill fortune of a land governed by bigots. It is an old tale, and not peculiar to Arabia.

It was not till near morning that we saw before us in indistinct row the long black lines of the immense date-groves that surround Hofhoof. Then, winding on amid rice-grounds and cornfields, we left on our right an isolated fort (to be described by daylight), passed some scattered villas with their gardens, approached the ruined town walls and entered the southern gate, now open and unguarded. Farther on a few streets brought us before the door of Aboo'Eysa's house, our desired resting-place.

## CHAPTER XI

## FROM HOFHOOF TO KATEEF

Hardly the place of such antiquity  
 Or note, of these great monarchies we find;  
 Only a fading verbal memory;  
 An empty name in writ is left behind.

*Fletcher*

*Aboo'Eysa's Home—General Character of the Inhabitants of Ḥaṣa—Our Lodgings at Hofhoof—Description of the Town—The Kôt—The Ḳaysareeyah—The Rifey'eyah—The Na'āthar—Fortifications—The Khoṭeym—Neighbourhood of Hofhoof—Hot Springs—Earthquakes—Nature of this District—Vegetation—Decline of Agriculture, Manufacture, and Commerce—Climate—Nabṭee Versification—Literature in Ḥaṣa—Dress—Ornament—Pleasure Parties of Moghor—Our own Life at Hofhoof—Evenings in Society—A Fair at Hofhoof—Visit to Mebarraz—The Castle and Town—Interior of a House—Visit to Omm-sabaa'—Description of the Fountain—An Arab Picnic—The Waters of Ḥaṣa—Women—Arab Currency—The Ḥaṣa Coinage—Plans for Visiting 'Omān—Departure from Hofhoof—An Incident—Kelābeeyah—The North Ḥaṣa Road—Character of the Country—'Azmiah—Hills of Ḳateef—The Plain—An Aqueduct—Town of Ḳateef—The Castle—The Sea—Description of the Harbour—Feysul's Navy—Farḥāt, Governor of Ḳateef—Palace of Ḳarmoot—Farḥāt's K'hāwah—Neighbourhood of Ḳateef—Ruins—A Semi-Persian Supper—We Embark for Maḥarreḳ.*

It was still night. All was silent in the street and house at the entrance of which we now stood; indeed, none but the master of a domicile could think of knocking at such an hour, nor was Aboo'Eysa expected at that precise moment. With much difficulty he contrived to awake the tenants; next the shrill voice of the lady was heard within in accents of joy and welcome, the door at last opened, and Aboo'Eysa invited us into a dark passage, where a gas-light would have been a remarkable improvement, and by this ushered us into the K'hāwah. Here

we lighted a fire, and after a hasty refreshment all lay down to sleep, nor awoke till the following forenoon.

Our stay at Hofhoof was very pleasant and interesting, not indeed through personal incidents and hairbreadth escapes—of which we had our fair portion at Ri'ād and elsewhere—but in the information here acquired, and in the novel character of everything around us, whether nature, art, or man. Aboo-'Eysa was very anxious that we should see as much as possible of the country, and procured us all means requisite for so doing, while the shelter of his roof, and the precautions which he adopted or suggested, obviated whatever dangers and inconveniences we had experienced in former stages of the journey. Besides, the general disposition of the inhabitants of Ḥaṣa is very different from that met with in Nejed and even in Shomer or Djowf, and much better adapted to make a stranger feel himself at home. A sea-coast people, looking mainly to foreign lands and the ocean for livelihood and commerce, accustomed to see among them not unfrequently men of dress, manners, and religion differing from their own, many of them themselves travellers or voyagers to Baṣrah, Bagdad, Baḥreyn, 'Omān, and some even farther, they are commonly free from that half-wondering, half-suspicious feeling which the sight of a stranger occasions in the isolated desert-girded centre; in short, experience, that best of masters, has gone far to unteach the lessons of ignorance, intolerance, and national aversion.

In Ḥaṣa also, independently of the external and circumstantial causes just alluded to, the character of the inhabitants themselves is little predisposed to exclusiveness and asperity. Wahhābeeism exists indeed, but only among the few who form the dominant and hated class; while its presence serves by natural reaction to render the main bulk of the inhabitants yet more averse from a system whose evils they know not only by theory, but more by frequent and bitter experience.

On awaking to an excellent breakfast of—O luxury unheard of since Gaza—roasted fowl, rice, and pastry, prepared by our Abyssinian hostess, Aboo-'Eysa's wife, a good-natured thoughtless dame, like most of her countrywomen, we began to look about us, and found ourselves in a comfortable dwelling, well adapted to the quiet tenor of life which we proposed here to lead for a few weeks. The K'hāwah was small and snug, not



admitting above twenty guests at a time ; alongside was a second and larger apartment, set apart by Aboo'Eysa for our more especial habitation, and opening on the courtyard ; two spacious rooms communicated with this on either side ; the one was at our disposal, the other answered the purposes of a nursery, and was the ordinary abode of the dusky lady, with her mulatto son and heir. A kitchen and two secluded chambers, into which the rougher sex might not indiscriminately venture, completed the ground storey ; while above were three empty and unfurnished rooms, and a large extent of flat roof, whereon it was very pleasant to sit morning and evening. And in the courtyard below we might at our leisure contemplate "the patient camels ruminate their food," as Southey has it in a well-known poem where the vivacity of the author's imagination almost retrieves his want of personal experience in many an Eastern scene.

Hofhoof, whose ample circuit contained during the last generation about thirty thousand inhabitants, now dwindled to twenty-three or twenty-four thousand, is divided into three quarters or districts. The general form of the town is that of a large oval. The public square, an oblong space of about three hundred yards in length by a fourth of the same in width, occupies the meeting point of these quarters ; the Kôt lies on its north-east, the Rifey'eeyah on the north-west and west, and the Na'âthar on the east and south. In this last quarter was our present home ; moreover, it stood in the part farthest removed from the Kôt and its sinister influences, while it was also sufficiently distant from the over-turbulent neighbourhood of the Rifey'eeyah, the centre of anti-Wahhâbee movements, and the name of which alone excited distrust and uneasiness in Nejdean minds.

The Kôt itself is a vast citadel, surrounded by a deep trench, with walls and towers of unusual height and thickness, earth-built with an occasional intermixture of stone, the work of the old Carmathian rulers ; it is nearly square, being about one-third of a mile in length by one-quarter in breadth. Three sides of this fortress are provided each with a central gate ; on the fourth or northern side a small but strong fortress forms a sort of keep ; it is square, and its towers attain more than forty feet in elevation, or about sixty, if we reckon from the bottom of the outer ditch. Within dwells the Nejdean governor, for-

merly Moḥammed-es-Sedeyree, but at the present day a negro of Feysul's, Belāl by name, a good slave and a baḍi ruler, if the disaffection of the town say true. Here too is the model orthodox Mesjid, where all is done after the most correct Wahnābee fashion; here abide the Meṭow'waa's and Zelators sent hither from Ri'aḍ, and other Nejdeans of 'Aareḍ, Woshem, and Yemāmah. Within the Kôt dwells also a population in number between two and three thousand souls; for the whole space, even up to the inner line of the walls, is thickly inhabited; it is divided by rectangular streets running from gate to gate, and from side to side.

The towers, fifteen or sixteen on each side of the Kôt, are mostly round, and provided with winding stairs, loopholes, and machicolations below the battlements; the intervening walls have similar means of defence. The trench without is for the greatest part dry, but can be filled with water from the garden wells beyond when occasion requires; the portals are strong and well-guarded.

On the opposite side of the square, and consequently belonging to the Rifey'eeyah, is the vaulted market-place or "Ḳaysareeyah," a name by which constructions of this nature must henceforth be called up to Mascat itself, though how this Latinism found its way across the Peninsula to lands which seem to have had so little commerce with the Roman or Byzantine empires, I cannot readily conjecture. This Ḳaysareeyah is in form a long barrel-vaulted arcade, with a portal at either end; the folding doors that should protect the entrances have here in Hofhoof been taken away, elsewhere they are always to be found. The sides are composed of shops, set apart in general for wares of cost, or at least what is here esteemed costly; thus weapons, cloth embroidery, gold and silver ornament, and analogous articles, are the ordinary stock-in-hand in the Ḳaysareeyah. Around it cluster several alleys, roofed with palm-leaves against the heat, and tolerably symmetrical; in the shops we may see the merchandise of Baḥreyn, 'Omān, Persia, and India exposed for sale, mixed with the manufactured produce of the country; workshops, smithies, carpenters' and shoemakers' stalls, and the like, are here also. In the open square itself stand countless booths for the sale of dates, vegetables, wood, salted locusts, and small ware of many kinds. Tobacco, however, once

a common article of purchase, is now proscribed by Wahnābee disciplinarians, and no longer offends the eye; its store and traffic are in private, where, after the over-true principle that "stolen waters are sweet," the supplies are copious and the purchasers active. Public auctions are frequently held in the square; here too barbers ply their trade, and smiths and shoemakers abound, though these latter callings number also many followers in other parts of the town.

The Rifey'eeyah, or noble quarter, covers a considerable extent, and is chiefly composed of tolerable, in some places of even handsome dwellings. The comparative elegance of domestic architecture in Hofhoof is due to the use of the arch, which after the long interval from Ma'ān to Ḥaṣa now at last reappears, and gives to the constructions of this province a lightness and a variety unknown in the monotonous and heavy piles of Nejed and Shomer. Another improvement is that the walls, whether of earth or stone, or of both mixed as is often the case, are here very generally coated with fine white plaster, much resembling the "chunam" of Southern India; ornament too is aimed at about the doorways and the ogee-headed windows, and is sometimes attained. The streets of the Rifey'eeyah are, for a hot country, wide and very clean; those of Damascus and even of Beyrouth are not one quarter so well kept. This quarter is very healthy; it stands on a slightly rising ground, implied by its name "Rifey'eeyah," or "elevation," and is exposed to the sea-breeze, here distinctly perceptible at times.

The Na'āthar is the largest quarter; it forms indeed a good half of the town, and completes its oval. In it every description of dwelling is to be seen—for rich and poor, for high and low, palace or hovel. Here too, but near the Kôt, has the pious policy of Feyṣul constructed the great mosque, where Moresco arches, light porticoes, smooth plaster, and a mat-spread floor, presented an appearance much surpassing in decency the naked cathedral, so to speak, of Ri'ad. In this quarter, however, the Wahnābee sect, as such, numbers but few partisans. Many merchants, traders, and men of business here reside; here strangers from Persia, 'Omān, Baḥreyn, from Ḥareek also, and Ḳaṭar, take up their dwelling; here weavers and artisans live and carry on their business.

The fortifications of the town were once strong and high, but

are now little better than heaps of ruins, of broken towers and winding stairs that lead to nothing. Without the walls lie the gardens and plantations, stretching away north and east as far as the eye can reach; on the south and west they form a narrower ring. At no great distance from the southern gate stands the isolated fortress which we had passed on the night of our arrival; it is a small but well-constructed building, and placed so as effectually to command and check all entrance from the south and west; its name, the "Khoṭeym," or "Bridle-bit," implies its object and its character. This fort is recent; the chief of Hofhoof erected it during the last century to serve as a "bridle" to the impetuous onset of the Wahnābees, when the hordes of Nejed poured down through the passes of Ghoweyr, and approached the capital of the province in this direction. It now stands dismantled, a page from past politics, like the Drachenfels or Conway Castle.

Another smaller fort, a watch-tower in fact, rises close by. Like the Khoṭeym it is built of unbaked bricks, hardened by process of time into the semblance of stone. For seventy or eighty years these unroofed walls have braved winter rains and spring blasts without losing an inch of their height or opening a fissure in their sides.

Hence due south the view extends over a waste and desert space, interposed between the province of Ḥaṣa and that of Ḳaṭar, a natural boundary dispensing with artificial limits between the rival domains of Nejed and 'Omān. Turning westward, we have before us a multitude of water-courses, no longer the wells of Nejed, but living running streams amid deep palm-groves, and a vegetation of that semi-Indian type peculiar to this part of Arabia. Many little villages stud the plain, till at a north-westerly distance of five or six miles the cavernous cliffs of Djebel-el-Moghāzee, or "Mountain of military expeditions," close in the prospect. North and east of Hofhoof is one green mass of waving foliage, save where occasionally the overflowing water-channels present that phenomenon specially dear in reminiscences to an east-country Englishman, namely, a real genuine marsh, with reeds, rushes, and long-legged waterfowl. Heaven bless them all! I cannot say how glad I was to see them after so long a separation; while around the rim of the swamps and pools rise stately palm-trees, laden with the



choicest dates of Arabia, or rather of the entire world. A solitary conical hillock, the freak of nature, rises alone on the north-east from the level of this well-watered plain; its summit bears the vestiges of Carmathian fortification. These details have, I trust, given my readers a tolerable idea of the town of Hofhoof and its immediate neighbourhood. Its general aspect is that of a white and yellow onyx, chased in an emerald rim; the name of "Hofhoof," like the Winchester of our own island, implies glitter and beauty.

But perhaps my reader, after accompanying me thus far, may feel thirsty, for the heat, even in December, is almost oppressive, and the sky cloudless as though it were June or July. So let us turn aside into that grassy plantation, where half-a-dozen buffaloes are cooling their ugly hides in a pool, and drink a little from the source that supplies it. When behold! the water is warm, almost hot. Do not be surprised, all the fountain sources and wells of Ḥaṣa are so, more or less; in some one can hardly bear to plunge one's hand; others are less above the average temperature, while a decidedly sulphurous taste is now and then perceptible. In fact, from the extreme north of this province down to its southernmost frontier, this same sign of subterranean fire is everywhere to be found. The rocks, too, are here very frequently of tufa and basalt, another mark of igneous agency. Lastly, the inhabitants informed me that slight shocks of earthquake—a phenomenon wholly unknown, so far as I could gather, to the historical records or the living tradition of Upper Nejed—are here nowise uncommon. One of unusual severity, and to which the rents and clefts in the high walls and the upper storeys of several houses in the town yet bore witness, was said to have taken place about thirty years before. Perhaps it was coincident with the well-known catastrophe which in 1836 buried the inhabitants of Ṣafed under the ruins of their town, rolled the huge stones of Kela'at-Djish (Djiscala) down the valley, and shook the strong castle-walls of Aleppo. In fact Ḥaṣa, in its littoral position alongside of the Persian Gulf, belongs to that great valley which, partly sunk beneath the waters of the Gulf itself, partly rising to form the bed of the Tigris and the Euphrates, reaches from the shores of Beloochistan and 'Omān up to Kara Dagħ and the mountains of Armenia, and at the upper extremity of which earthquakes are

only too common. The continuity of this long valley is further attested by the remarkable uniformity of its climate; it forms a huge hot-air funnel, the base of which is on the tropics, while its extremity reaches 37 degrees of northern latitude. Hence it comes that the Semoom, unknown in the far more southerly regions of Syria and Palestine (my readers are, I trust, too well informed to fall into the popular error of confounding the specific and gaseous Semoom with the Shilook or Sirocco of Syria, Malta, and even Italy), pays occasional visits to Mosoul and Djezeerat 'Omar, while the thermometer at Bagdad attains in summer an elevation capable of staggering the belief of even an old Indian, at least from the Bombay side.

The products of Ḥaṣa are many and various; the monotony of Arab vegetation, its eternal palm and ithel, ithel and palm, are here varied by new foliage, and growths unknown to Nejed and Shomer. True, the date-palm still predominates, nay, here attains its greatest perfection. But the Nabaḵ, with its rounded leaves and little crab-apple fruit, a mere bush in Central Arabia, becomes in Ḥaṣa a stately tree; the papay too, so well known in the more easterly Peninsula, appears, though seldom, and stunted in growth, along with some other trees common on the coast from Cutch to Bombay. Indigo is here cultivated, though not sufficiently for the demands of commerce; cotton is much more widely grown than in Yemāmah; rice-fields abound, and the sugar-cane is often planted, though not, I believe, for the extraction of the sugar; the peasants of Ḥaṣa sell the reed by retail bundles in the market-place, and the purchasers take it home to gnaw at leisure in their houses. Corn, maize, millet, vetches of every kind, radishes, onions, garlic, beans, in short, almost all legumina and cerealia, barley excepted (at least I neither saw nor heard of any), cover the plain, and under a better administration might be multiplied tenfold. But a heavy land-tax and arbitrary contributions have deeply discouraged the agriculturist no less than the merchant. For centuries Ḥaṣa had carried on a flourishing commerce with 'Omān, Persia, and India on the right, and with Baṣrah and Bagdad on the left, nay even with Damascus itself, in spite of political hostility and local distance. For the cloaks of Ḥaṣa manufacture, and the embroidery which adorns them, are alike unrivalled; such delicacy of work, such elegance of pattern, are

unknown save in Cachemire alone. The wool employed is of exquisite fineness, and, when skilfully interwoven with silk, forms a tissue alike strong to wear and beautiful to the eye; while its borderings of gold and silver thread, tastefully intermixed with the gayest colours, may be envied, but never equalled, by Syria and Persia. In the workmanship of the precious metals, in the adornment of a sword-hilt or a powder-flask, of a dagger or a Nargheelah, the artisans of Ḥaṣa, though inferior in this respect to those of 'Omān, have nothing to fear from the competition of Damascus or Bagdad. In implements of copper and brass, also, they well know how to combine elegance with utility, and the coffee-pots of Ḥaṣa certainly outvie any to be met with north of Baṣrah. All these and similar objects were once regular articles of an advantageous exportation, and when added to the never-failing trade in those Khalāṣ dates, peculiar to this district, and which make all mouths water from Bombay to Mosoul, besides a supplementary bale of sugarcane or the like, formed an excellent outport trade. Cloth of more ordinary quality, cutlery, ironwork, swords, spears, crockery, silk, gold thread, silver thread, and a hundred analogous articles, came in return. Hence the great wealth of the Ḥaṣa merchants, and consequently of the local government, and hence the monuments whose relics yet attest that wealth. Now all is fallen away; the Nejdean eats out the marrow and fat of the land; while by his senseless war against whatever it pleases his fanaticism to proscribe, under the name of luxury—against tobacco and silk, ornament and dress—he cuts off an important branch of useful commerce, while he loses no opportunity of snubbing and discouraging the unorthodox trader. To this praiseworthy end, whenever an expedition is ordered, or a levy made, the malignant policy of Mohanna, already mentioned in our chapter on Kaseem, finds a yet wider application in Ḥaṣa, where the first who receives the bidding to sling the musket and shoulder the spear is the wealthy merchant, the busy shopkeeper, and the hard-working artisan; and all to the detriment prepense of their affairs in hand. Such had been pre-eminently the system adopted by Feyṣul in the actual war; and when we reached Hofhoof we found full half of its better inhabitants thus forcibly absent on a war whose only result could be to rivet the hated Wahnābee yoke still more firmly on their own necks.



The climate of Ḥaṣa, as I have already implied, is very different from that of the uplands, and not equally favourable to health and physical activity. Hence a doctor, like myself, if my readers will allow me the title, has here more work and better fees; this latter circumstance is also owing to the greater amount of ready money in circulation, and the higher value set on medical science by men whose intellects are much more cultivated than those of their Nejdean neighbours. In appearance the inhabitants of Ḥaṣa are generally good-sized and well-proportioned, but somewhat sallow in the face, and of a less muscular developement than is usual inland; their features, though regular, are less marked than those of the Nejdeans, and do not exhibit the same half-Jewish type; on the contrary, there is something in them that reminds a beholder of the Rajpoot or the Guzeratee. They are passionately fond of literature and poetry, whether it be according to the known Arabic rules and metre, or whether it follow the Nabṭee, that is, the Nabathæan versification.

This latter form of composition, occasionally met with even in Nejed, but rare, becomes here common, more so indeed than the Arabic, from which it differs in scansion, metre, and rhyme. In Nabṭee verses scansion goes by accent, not by quantity; the metre is variable, even in the same piece; and the rhyme, instead of being continuous, is alternate. In a word, this class of poetry presents in form a strong resemblance to the ordinary English ballad, and, like it, is the popular style of the country. The standard of poetry in Ḥaṣa seemed to me decidedly higher than in Nejed. On the other hand, the language of common conversation is inferior in copiousness, purity, and flexibility to that of the inner uplands. However, the inferiority of the Ḥaṣa tongue is compensated by superiority of Ḥaṣa intellect; and in what may be called rational conversation and in consecutive reasoning the men of Hofhoof surpass by far the inhabitants of Ri'ad and Ḥā'yel. Foreign intercourse, while debasing their grammar, has refined their wits; perhaps, too, their acuteness is intrinsic and hereditary, though favoured and fostered by local and other circumstances.

The dress here worn presented an agreeable variety to our eyes, wearied by the unparalleled monotony of costume, male or female, from Djowf to Yemāmah. In Hofhoof and the



villages around, the wide white Arab shirt or smock is not unfrequently replaced by the closer-fitting, saffron-dyed, silk-embroidered vest of 'Omān, a garment which recalls to mind the Anghee or Anghurka common in Western India; instead of the eternal Kafee'yah, a turban, now large and white, now coloured and of narrower folds, adorns many a head; the light red cloak, peculiar, I believe, to the eastern coast, diversifies the blackness of the Arab mantle, while the shining red leather and elegant shape of Baḥreyn or 'Omān sandals protect the feet better and with more grace than the coarse brown-yellow productions of the Nejdean shoemaker. Lastly a crooked dagger, silver-hilted and mounted, may here be occasionally seen at the waist; it becomes universal when we enter the limits of 'Omān.

Before the subjection of Ḥaṣa to the Wahnābee, ornament and display were the mode in the province, and even now silk and embroidery appear far more frequently than is consistent with complete orthodoxy. At the period of the great Ri'āḍ reform in 1856, described in a previous chapter of this work, certain zealous preachers visited Hofhoof, and, deeming it highly probable that the iniquities of the inhabitants had borne a share in the late visitation of the cholera, preached copiously and emphatically against gay dresses and worldly vanity. But finding the ramparts of sin proof against all the batteries of pulpit eloquence, the hands of the missionaries achieved here as elsewhere what their tongues could not; and while the depraved wretches of Ḥaṣa yet hesitated to tear and cast aside their unrighteous gewgaws, orthodox Nejdeans lent them their friendly aid, till, as eyewitnesses assured me, torn silk and unravelled embroidery literally bestrewed the streets. A fierce campaign was of course simultaneously waged against tobacco, which henceforth retired into private life.

Another evil practice, common among the upper classes, was at this time somewhat subdued, though not entirely got under. The merchants and traders of Hofhoof and Mebarraz, had from time immemorial been in the custom of organizing pleasure-parties especially during the days of vacation from ordinary business. These intervals of social relaxation lasted often a week or two at a time, and were generally allotted to the autumn season. North-east of Ḥaṣa rises a long isolated ridge,

basalt and sandstone, about four hundred feet in height; its cliffs are pierced in every direction by large natural caverns, and their name, "Moghor," or "caves," has become synonymous with the mountain itself. Within these caves the air is cool, even during the hottest months of the year; and fresh water flows in a perennial supply at the mountain foot. Hither accordingly the merchants and business-men of Ḥaṣa would repair when wearied of their accounts and ledger-books, and pass together a few days in the caverns of Moghor, amid the ease of familiar conversation, well-furnished tables, music, dancing, and whatever like diversions even thinking men often allow themselves when tired with hard and sedentary work. Now the Nejdeans regarded the pleasure-parties of Djebel Moghor with hardly less horror than what a fiddle heard in the public streets on a Sunday would excite in Glasgow. Feysul issued his orders to put down the abomination with a high hand; some of the culprits were arrested, others fined; and what yet remains of these diversions, for they continue even now, is managed by stealth, or at least by only a small number, and under due precautions. Our own stay at Hofhoof will furnish an example.

I have already said that our great endeavour in Ḥaṣa was to observe unobserved, and thus to render our time as barren as might be in incidents and catastrophes. Not that we went into the opposite extreme of leading an absolutely retired and therefore uneventful life. Abou-'Eysa took care from the first to bring us into contact with the best and the most cultivated families of the town, nor had my medical profession anywhere a wider range for its exercise, or better success than in Hofhoof. Friendly invitations, now to dinner, now to supper, were of daily occurrence; and we sat at tables where fish, no longer mere salted shrimps, announced our vicinity to the coast; vermicelli too, and other kinds of pastry, denoted the influence of Persian art on the kitchen. Smoking within-doors was general; but the Nargheelah often replaced, and that advantageously, the short Arab pipe; perfumes are no less here in use than in Nejed. I need hardly say that domestic furniture is here much more varied and refined than what adorns the dwellings of Sedeyr and 'Aareḍ; and the stools, low dinner-tables, cupboards, shelves, and bedsteads, are very like the fittings-up of a

respectable Hindoo house at Baroda or Cambay. Wood-carving is also common; it finds its usual place on door-posts and window-frames; lastly, decorative figures painted on the walls, though not absolutely equal to the frescoes of Giotto or Ghirlandajo, yet suffice to give the rooms a more cheerful and, if I may be allowed the expression, a more Christian look than the unvarying brown and white daub of the apartments in 'Aared and Kaseem.

What however gives to the houses of Ḥaṣa their most decided superiority over those of Central Arabia, is the employment of the arch, without which indeed there may be building, but hardly construction. The Ḥaṣa arch, whether large or small, contracted to a window or spanning the entire abode, is, I believe, never the segment of one circle, but of two; it is half-way between the form peculiar to Tudor Gothic, and the "lancet" of the Plantagenets. Neither did I witness here the horse-shoe curve characteristic of what is called Moresco architecture; it is a simple, broad, but pointed arch, within which an equilateral, sometimes an obtuse, but never an acute triangle, could be inscribed. The arch brings other improvements with it; the entire house becomes here much more regular, its apartments wider, its arrangement more symmetrical, light and air circulate with greater abundance and facility; while the roof, instead of remaining a mere mass of heavy woodwork, supported midway on clumsy pillars, assumes a something of lightness and spring, very refreshing to the eye of a traveller just arrived from Ri'ad.

We had passed about a week in the town when Aboo-'Eysa entered the side-room where Barakāt and I were enjoying a moment of quiet, and copying out "Nabṭee" poetry, and shut the door behind him. He then announced to us, with a face and tone of serious anxiety, that two of the principal Nejdean agents belonging to the Kōt had just come into the K'hāwah, under pretext of medical consultation, but in reality, said he, to identify the strangers. We put on our cloaks—a preliminary measure of decorum equivalent to face and hand-washing in Europe—and presented ourselves before our inquisitors with an air of conscious innocence and scientific solemnity. Conversation ensued; and we talked so learnedly about bilious and sanguine complexions, cephalic veins, and Indian drugs, with such



apposite citations from the Coran, and such loyal phrases for Feyṣul, that Aboo-'Eysa was beside himself for joy; and the spies, after receiving some prescriptions of the bread-pill and aromatic-water formula, left the house no wiser than before. Our friends too, and they were now many, well guessing what we might really be, partly from our own appearance, and partly from the known character of our host (according to old Homer's true saying, *Heaven always leads like to like*), did each and all their best to throw sand into Wahhābee eyes, and everything went on sociably and smoothly. A blessing on the medical profession! none other gives such excellent opportunities for securing everywhere confidence and friendship.

A custom unknown in Shomer and in Nejed, but very common in other parts of the East, fixes certain days of the week for holding public fairs in such and such localities, whither the inhabitants, and more particularly the villagers, of all the neighbourhood round repair, to sell or to buy, while auctions, games, recitations, races, and similar inventions of man's busy levity, keep up the animation.

This usage has prevailed from time immemorial in the province of Haṣa. The weekly fair of Hofhoof is held on Thursday, that of the great village of Mebarraz to the north on Monday, and so on. Aboo-'Eysa, who was very desirous to impress us with a great idea of his adopted country, and to that end sought occasions to show us the most and the best of it, took care to let us know the whereabouts of the fair. We went thither, and passed several hours of much amusement among the booths erected on these occasions, chatting with townsmen and peasants amid a scene the animation of which might almost rival that of Epsom on the Derby-day, or Frankfort during a "Messwoche." The place of meeting was on the open ground beyond the northern gate, close under the outer walls of the Kôt. The vendors were mostly, if not entirely, villagers, and had brought with them wares recommendable by their cheapness rather than their elegance: heavy sandals, coarsely-woven cloaks, old muskets and daggers, second-hand brass utensils, besides camels, dromedaries, asses, and a few horses. Others, wandering pedlars by profession, and never absent in crowds like these, exposed in temporary booths glass bracelets, arm-rings, anklerings, copper seals, and beads, with an occasional European



drinking-glass, imported through Koweyt or Baṣrah, and mirrors whose distorted reflection might have saved any fair woman the trouble of making mouths in them. The booths themselves were arranged almost symmetrically, and formed streets and squares; in these latter were great heaps of vegetables and dates piled up before male and female sellers, bags of meal and flour, heaps of charcoal, faggots of firewood, with bundles of sugar-cane for the sweet teeth of Hofhoof. Around, asses were tethered, foolish-looking camels stood neck in air, and half-a-dozen youngsters of the town made an immense dust by racing horses under pretence of trying them for purchase. Jokes and laughter were heard everywhere, and Arab gravity half forgot itself in this promiscuous out-of-doors assembly.

When Monday came we visited Mebarraz, performing the journey thither on donkeys equipped with side-saddles—a circumstance for which I must apologise to my fair readers; but side-saddles are the fashion of Ḥaṣa for all donkey-riders, men or women indifferently. Thus mounted we cantered off to the village, if indeed a population of nigh twenty thousand souls might not claim for Mebarraz the name of town. But it is unwallled, and the fort belonging to it stands on an isolated eminence at a little distance by the west. Near this fort the fair was held; its resemblance to that just described at Hofhoof renders description unnecessary. The town is of very irregular appearance; it contains many handsome houses, intermixed with wretched hovels. One of our party, 'Obeyd by name, owned a kinsman among the townsfolk, and availed himself of the circumstance to compass a dinner invitation, at which I saw honey for the first time since many months. The dwelling of our host was absolutely like a middle-class house at Ḥomṣ or Ḥamah, with small matted rooms, low windows, a little courtyard, a well, and with that peculiar air of seclusion and privacy, even in the midst of a street, which may have struck my readers if they have ever entered the abode of a friend (a native of course) in Syria, at Mosoul, or at Bagdad. Ḥaṣa in fact already approximates to the mixed districts, though the Arab element is yet predominant.

Almost the whole space between Hofhoof and Mebarraz, a distance of about three miles, is filled up with gardens, plantations, and rushing streams of tepid water. Here and for many

leagues around grow the dates entitled "Khalās,"—a word of which the literal and not inappropriate English translation is "quintessence,"—a species peculiar to Ḥaṣa, and the *facile princeps* of its kind. The fruit itself is rather smaller than the Ḳaseem date, of a rich amber colour, verging on ruddiness, and semitransparent. It would be absurd to attempt by description to give any idea of a taste; but I beg my Indian readers at least to believe that a "Massigaum" mango is not more superior to a "Junglee," than is the Khalās fruit to that current in Syrian or Egyptian marts. In a word, it is the perfection of the date. The tree that bears it may by a moderately practised eye be recognised by its stem, slenderer than that of the ordinary palm, its less tufted foliage, and its smoother bark. Another species, also limited to this province, is the Reḵab; it would hold the first rank anywhere else. During my stay in Arabia I counted a dozen kinds of date, each perfectly distinct from the other; and I doubt not that a longer acquaintance might have enabled me to reckon a dozen more. As to the Khalās in particular, its cultivation is an important item among the rural occupations of Ḥaṣa; its harvest an abundant source of wealth; and its exportation, which reaches from Mosoul on the north-west to Bombay on the south-east, nay, I believe, to the African coast of Zanjibar, forms a large branch of the local commerce.

On another day Aboo-'Eysa proposed a trip to Omm-Sabaa', literally, "the Mother of Seven." My readers will naturally suppose a call on some respectable matron with a large family; she is, however, in reality a large hot spring, gushing up from the depths of a natural basin, out of which seven streams, the daughters of this fruitful parent, flow in different directions and fertilize the land far and wide. The spot itself is about eight miles distant from Hofhoof, due north. When the moment came we assembled, a band of twelve in all; our companions were friends of some standing, and well inclined to be merry. The muster-roll ran as follows: Barakāt and myself, five gentlemen (they deserved the name) of Hofhoof, two mulattoes or half-castes, a negro, and a couple of lads. Aboo-'Eysa remained to keep house at home; his wife's care had provided us with boiled chickens, pastry, molasses, coffee, and other good things. We mounted our donkeys and cantered off, but took care not

to pass through the town for fear of encountering some Nejdean observer. Instead of keeping the streets we made a circuit outside the city walls, amid tanks and fields, often at imminent risk of falling off the narrow causeway on the back of some buffalo weltering in the mud beneath, racing our beasts, and ascertaining by actual experience that Arabs on a pleasure party can rival all the freaks of Western schoolboys on an extra half-holiday. We left Mebarraz on one side, and then went three or four miles at full speed over a wide plain, where palm-trees bordered the right, and the H̄asa mountain-range stretched arid and fantastic on our left, while all along were ranged from distance to distance watch-towers and isolated forts, now abandoned to decay. At last the rush of waters and a broad grass-banked stream conducted us, as we followed its course, up to Omm-Sabaa'.

This 'fountain rises in a circular hollow, about fifty feet in diameter, and very deep, from whose centre well up waters so hot that no bather dares venture on a plunge without first injuring his feet and arms to the temperature by cautious degrees. The basin is brim-full from rim to rim, and from seven apertures in the stony margin run out the seven streams whence the fountain takes its name, broad and deep enough to turn as many water-mills, were such placed on their course. Some of the channels are natural, but the total number of seven has evidently been completed by art; whether with any planetary reference I do not venture to decide; but an analogous arrangement which we shall afterwards meet with in the cisterns of the Persian coast, and which is undoubtedly also of analogous origin, would somewhat incline me to think no less of Omm-Sabaa'. The stonework that surrounds the pool is evidently ancient, but there is no inscription or record of date, an omission of which I have already remarked the universality in Central and Eastern Arabia. All around palm-trees and Nabak shade the grassy banks, and deep masses of vegetation shut out the distant view. The waters of Omm-Sabaa' flow the same, winter and summer. Fish, frogs, and other aquatic creatures cannot live within the heated basin, or even in the streams near their immediate source, but they abound a little farther down the channels.

The sun now sat high and bright in his meridian tower; the



breeze was delightful; we examined the fountain-head in all its bearings, then bathed, swam, wrestled, drank coffee, chatted, dined, smoked, slept, and bathed again. All went merry as a marriage-bell till we discovered that, by one of the omissions inseparable from a pic-nic, no coffee-cups had been brought, a circumstance which had remained unnoticed till the coffee itself was ready, and nothing remained for us but to drink it out of the sooty coffee-pot wherein it had been prepared. Luckily one of the party, cleverer than the rest, rode over at a venture to a neighbouring village, whence he soon returned with a donkey-load of cups. Trivial circumstances these: I recount them merely by way of counterpoise to the many stilted and padded descriptions of Eastern life, and of Arab in particular. Meanwhile the 'Aşr came on; by common consent prayers were supposed to have been said, and we remounted our side-saddles and galloped homewards; some of our companions got thrown on the way, others stopped to pick them up; at last we all arrived safe at Hofhoof, rather late and tired, but in high spirits, and well contented with our excursion.

I have described with tolerable minuteness two of the Hāşa hot fountains; there are three hundred such, according to Aboo-'Eysa's version, in the province. I would not warrant the numerical precision of this statement; but I can vouch for the great frequency of these sources, having met with more than a dozen within a very limited space; one in particular, at about three miles' ride eastward of Hofhoof, proved even more abundant in its supply than Omm-Sabaa' herself, though of a more supportable temperature.

Before we leave Hāşa I must add a few remarks to complete the sketch given of the province and of its inhabitants; want of a suitable opportunity for inserting them before, has thrown them together at this point of my narrative.

My fair readers will be pleased to learn that the veil and other restraints inflicted on the gentle sex by Islamic rigorism, not to say worse, are much less universal and more easily dispensed with in Hāşa; while in addition the ladies of the land enjoy a remarkable share of those natural gifts which no institutions, and even no cosmetics, can confer; namely, beauty of face and elegance of form. Might I venture on the delicate and somewhat invidious task of constructing a "beauty-scale"



for Arabia, and for Arabia alone, the Bedouin women would on this kalometer be represented by zero, or at most 1°; a degree higher would represent the female sex of Nejed; above them rank the women of Shomer, who are in their turn surmounted by those of Djowf. The fifth or sixth degree symbolizes the fair ones of Ḥaṣa; the seventh those of Ḳaṭar; and lastly, by a sudden rise of ten degrees at least, the seventeenth or eighteenth would denote the pre-eminent beauties of 'Omān. Arab poets occasionally languish after the charmers of Ḥejāz; I never saw any one to charm me, but then I only skirted the province. All bear witness to the absence of female loveliness in Yemen; and I should much doubt whether the mulatto races and dusky complexions of Ḥaḍramaut have much to vaunt of. But in Ḥaṣa a decided improvement on this important point is agreeably evident to the traveller arriving from Nejed, and he will be yet further delighted on finding his Calypsos much more conversible, and having much more too in their conversation than those he left behind him in Sedeyr and 'Aared.

In a district hardly less agricultural than commercial, I might be expected to say something about ploughs and harrows, spades and flails. But the great Niebuhr in his account of Arabia has so faithfully and so minutely described the instruments customary in Arab tillage, and their use, that nothing is left for me to add. Nor need I especially sketch the peasant, much the same all the world over; nor the peasant-houses, generally mere earth hovels or palm-leaf sheds; the latter perhaps the more numerous of the two in Ḥaṣa. But I should not pass over in silence the increasing number of kine, all hunchbacked, Brahminee-bull fashion; they are often put to the plough, though not exclusively, being at times replaced by asses; by horses, I need hardly say, never. Regarding the horse, I have only to notice that the breed here resembles that of Shomer, namely, a half-caste Nejdean. Dromedaries are many and cheap; they yield the palm of excellence to those of 'Omān alone.

In Ḥaṣa only, throughout the whole course of my long journey, did I meet with the genuine produce of an Arab mint. In Djowf and Shomer the currency is Turkish or European, identical in short with that of Syria, Egypt, and 'Irāk, from one or other of which three sources whatever coin circulates in the Djowf is derived. In Nejed Proper, where Turkish money is

no longer passable, nor have the French or German coinages, francs or florins, found acceptance, the Spanish rial and the English sovereign are privileged by retaining their monetary value. For small change the inhabitants of Sedejr, 'Aared, and Yemāmah avail themselves of what they call a "Djedeedah," or "new coin," doubtless so entitled on the principle of *lucus a non lucendo*, for it is in fact very old; a piece of debased silver about the size of a full-grown sixpence, and which, so far as the faint vestiges of inscription and superscription can with pain and labour be deciphered, though oftener not a vestige of them remains, seems to have issued from the Egyptian mint at a date far anterior to the Moḥammed-'Alee dynasty. The smallest currency in Nejed bears the name of Khorḍah; it consists of little irregular copper bits, now square, now round, sometimes triangular, often polygonal; these are the melancholy productions of the Baṣrah mint, at a date of two or three hundred years back. The inscription, which gives the names of the local governors who issued this coinage, is almost Cufic, so coarse and angular are the letters. But Khorḍah or Djedeedah, all is foreign; the Wahhābee government has not nor ever had a mint of its own.

But in Ḥaṣa we find an entirely original and a perfectly local coinage, namely, the "Ṭoweelah," or "long bit," as it is very suitably called, from its form. It consists of a small copper bar, much like a stout tack, about an inch in length, and split at one end, with the fissure slightly opened; so that it looks altogether like a compressed Y. Along one of its flattened sides run a few Cufic characters, indicating the name of the Carmathian prince under whose auspices this choice production of Arab numismatics was achieved; nothing else is to be read on the Ṭoweelah, neither date nor motto. This currency is available in Ḥaṣa, its native place, alone; and hence the proverb, "Zey' Ṭoweelat-il-Ḥaṣa," "like a Ḥaṣa long bit," is often applied to a person who can only make himself valuable at home. Besides the Ṭoweelah, this last monetary vestige of former independence, the Persian "Tomān," gold or silver, and the Anglo-Indian rupee, anna, and pice, are prevalent in Ḥaṣa. My readers may rightly conjecture that throughout Arabia barter is by far more frequent among the villagers, and even the poorer townsmen, than purchase; though in Ḥaṣa even a peasant can

not unfrequently count down silver Tomāns and brass Towee-lahs when occasion requires. But among Bedouins and even villagers in Nejed, computation in an artificial medium surpasses the ordinary range of human faculties.

During our stay at Hofhoof, Aboo-'Eysa left untried no arts of Arab rhetoric and persuasion to determine me to visit 'Omān, assuring me again and again that whatever we had yet seen, even in his favourite Ḥaṣa, was nothing compared to what remained to see in that more remote country. My companion, tired of our long journey, and thinking the long distance already laid between him and his Syrian home quite sufficient in itself without further leagues tacked on to it, was very little disposed for a supplementary expedition. Indeed, considering the strong attachment that the inhabitants of Central Syria bear to their native land, and the difficulty that there is in inducing them to quit it for anything like a serious journey, I might rather wonder that Barakāt had come thus far, than that he was unwilling to go farther. Englishmen, on the contrary, are rovers by descent and habit; my own mind was now fully made up to visit 'Omān at all risks, whether Barakāt came with me or not. Meanwhile, we formed our plan for the next immediate stage of our route. My companion and I were to quit Hofhoof together, leaving Aboo-'Eysa behind us for a week or two at Ḥaṣa, whilst we journeyed northwards to Ḳaṭeef, and thence took ship for the town of Menāmah in Baḥreyn. In this latter place Aboo-'Eysa was to rejoin us by the route of 'Ajeyr, a seaport much nearer than Ḳaṭeef to Hofhoof. Our main reason for thus separating our movements in time and in direction, was to avoid the too glaring appearance of acting in concert while yet in a land under Wahhābee government and full of Wahhābee spies and reporters, especially after the suspicions thrown on us at Ri'ād. Ulterior arrangements about 'Omān were to be deferred till we should all meet again together at Menāmah. Aboo-'Eysa's quality of pilgrim conductor obliged him to visit Baḥreyn anyhow, in order there to arrange several affairs relative to the transport of his future companions. From Baḥreyn his way lay by sea to Aboo-Shahr, the customary rendezvous of Persian pilgrims, and their starting-point for Mecca. The ordinary allowance of time for a caravan from Aboo-Shahr to Mecca, *viâ* Nejed, is about two months, inclu-



ding the sea-passage from the Persian to the Arabian coast ; hence the pilgrims must all be assembled and ready at Aboo-Shahr by the end of the first week in Show'wāl (the month succeeding Ramadhan) at latest.

Barakāt and myself prepared for our departure ; we purchased a few objects of local curiosity, got in our dues of medical attendance, paid and received the customary P. P. C. visits, and even tendered our respects to the negro governor Belāl, where he sat at his palace door in the Kôt, holding a public audience, and looking much like any other well-dressed black. No passport was required for setting out on the road to Kaṭeef, which in the eyes of government forms only one and the same province with Ḥaṣa, though in many respects very different from it. The road is perfectly secure, plundering Bedouins or highway robbers are here out of the question. However we stood in need of companions, not for escort, but as guides. Aboo-'Eysa made enquiries in the town, and found three men who chanced to be just then setting out on their way for Kaṭeef, who readily consented to join band with us for the road. Our Abyssinian hostess supplied us with a whole sack of provisions, and our Hofhoof associates found us in camels. Thus equipped and mounted, we took an almost touching leave of Aboo-'Eysa's good-natured wife, kissed the baby, exchanged an *au revoir* with its father, and set out on the afternoon of December 19th, leaving behind us many pleasant acquaintances, from some of whom I received messages and letters while at Baḥreyn. So far as inhabitants are concerned, to no town in Arabia should I return with equal confidence of finding a hearty greeting and a welcome reception, than to Hofhoof and its amiable and intelligent merchants.

We quitted the town by the north-eastern gate of the Rifey-'eeyah, where the friends, who, according to Arab custom, had accompanied us thus far in a sort of procession, wished us a prosperous journey, took a last adieu, and returned home. After some hours, we bivouacked on a little hillock of clean sand, with the dark line of the Hofhoof woods on our left, while at some distance in front a copious fountain poured out its rushing waters with a noise distinctly audible in the stillness of the night, and irrigated a garden worthy of Damascus or Antioch. The night air was temperate—neither cold like that of



Nejed, nor stifling like that of Southern India; the sky clear and starry. From our commanding position on the hill I could distinguish Soheyl or Canopus, now setting; and following him, not far above the horizon, the three upper stars of the Southern Cross, an old Indian acquaintance; two months later in 'Oman I had the view of the entire constellation.

Next morning we traversed a large plain of light and sandy soil, intersected by occasional ridges of basalt and sandstone. Everywhere were indications of abundant moisture at a very slight depth below the surface; dwarf-palms, shrubs, nay, reeds and rushes, sprang up at short intervals, and now and then we passed a little pool in some sheltered hollow, fringed with overhanging bushes, while the ruins of two large villages, now deserted like Auburn, witnessed to the decline of the land under Nejdean rule. Hundreds and hundreds of the inhabitants have recently emigrated; a few families northward, the greater number to the islands adjacent to Baḥreyn, to the Persian coast, and the kindred dominions of 'Omān.

We journeyed on all day, meeting no Bedouins and few travellers. At evening we encamped in a shallow valley, near a cluster of brimming wells, some sweet, some brackish, where the traces of half-obliterated watercourses, and the vestiges of crumbling house-walls indicated the former existence of a village, now also deserted. We passed a comfortable night under the shelter of palms and high brushwood, mixed with gigantic aloes and yuccas; and rose next morning early to our way. Our direction lay north-east. In the afternoon we caught our first glimpse of Djebel Mushahhar, a pyramidal peak some seven hundred feet high and about ten miles south of Ḳaṭeef, and gradually mounted the broad low range of the Ḳaṭeef hills, having Djebel Mushahhar at a considerable distance on our right. But the sea, though I looked towards it and for it with an eagerness somewhat resembling that of the Ten Thousand on their approach to the Euxine, remained shut out from view by a further continuation of the heights. Here we exchanged the sands of Ḥaṣa for a rocky and blackish ground; the air blew cold and sharp, nor was I sorry when at evening we halted near a cluster of trees, exactly at the boundary line of the Ḳaṭeef territory. Our dromedaries (beautiful creatures to look at) were turned loose to graze, when lo! they took advantage

of the dusk to sheer off, nor were they recaptured without much difficulty; thus giving us proof of what I had often heard, and have mentioned in the first chapter of this work, that a camel when once his own master, never dreams of coming home, except under compulsion.

Next day we rose at dawn, and crossed the hills of Kaṭeef by a long winding path, till after some hours of labyrinthine track we came in sight of the dark plantation-line that girdles Kaṭeef itself landwards. The sea lies immediately beyond; this we knew, but we could not obtain a glimpse of its waters through the verdant curtain stretched between.

About midday we descended the last slope, a steep sandstone cliff, which looks as though it had been the sea-limit of a former period. We now stood on the coast itself. Its level is as nearly as possible that of the Gulf beyond; a few feet of a higher tide than usual would cover it up to the cliffs. Hence it is a decidedly unhealthy land, though fertile and even populous; but the inhabitants are mostly weak in frame and sallow in complexion. The atmosphere was thick and oppressive, the heat intense, and the vegetation hung rich and heavy around; my companions talked about suffocation, and I remembered once more the Indian coast. When arrived under the shade of the tall close-set trees, we had to keep a causeway, narrow like that of Bunyan's Valley of Desolation, but not equally straight, and where "Christian" himself might have reasonably feared to slip into the quagmire of mud and water on either side. Luckily for us, instead of Apollyon and blasphemous fiends, we met at every turn harmless peasants and artisans coming and going, and still increasing as we approached the town. Another hour of afternoon march brought us to Kaṭeef itself, at its western portal; a high stone arch of elegant form, and flanked by walls and towers, but all dismantled and ruinous. Close by the two burial grounds, one for the people of the land, the other for the Nejdean rulers and colony—divided even after death by mutual hatred and anathema. Folly, if you will, but folly not peculiar to the East.

The town itself is crowded, damp, and dirty, and has altogether a gloomy, what for want of a better epithet I would call a *mouldy* look; much business was going on in the market and streets, but the ill-favoured and very un-Arab look of the

shopkeepers and workmen confirms what history tells of the Persian colonization of this city. Indeed the inhabitants of the entire district, but more especially of the capital, are a mongrel race, in which Persian blood predominates, mixed with that of Baṣrah, Bagdad, and the 'Irāk.

We urged our starting dromedaries across the open square in front of the market-place, traversed the town in its width, which is scarce a quarter of its length (like other coast towns), till we emerged from the opposite gate, and then looked out with greedy eyes for the sea, now scarce ten minutes distant. In vain as yet, so low lies the land, and so thick cluster the trees. But after a turn or two we came alongside of the outer walls, belonging to the huge fortress of Ḳarmoot, and immediately afterwards the valley opening out showed us almost at our feet the dead shallow flats of the bay. How different from the bright waters of the Mediterranean, all glitter and life, where we had bidden them farewell eight months before at Gaza! Like a leaden sheet, half ooze, half sedge, the muddy sea lay in view waveless, motionless; to our left the massive walls of the castle went down almost to the water's edge, and then turned to leave a narrow esplanade between its circuit and the Gulf. On this ledge were ranged a few rusty guns of large calibre, to show how the place was once guarded; and just in front of the main gate a crumbling outwork, which a single cannon-shot would level with the ground, displayed six pieces of honey-combed artillery, their mouths pointed seawards. Long stone benches without invited us to leave our camels crouching on the esplanade, while we seated ourselves and rested a little before requesting the governor to grant us a day's hospitality and permission to embark for Baḥreyn.

The castle of Ḳaṭeef stands on the innermost curve of a little bay, itself scalloped out in the base of a much larger one; its aspect is almost due east. To north and south run out two long promontories, like advancing horns, tipped, the one by the fortress of Dareem, the other by that of Dāman. In the lesser or inner bay before us rode at high water and stranded at ebb some twenty or thirty Arab barks, varying in size from a small schooner down to an open fishing boat, but all equipped with lateen sails, the only rig here known. One large hull not far from land attracted our notice, and we felt a suitable thrill of reverential



awe on learning that it was Feyṣul's navy, with which, sometimes in line and sometimes in column (like the gallant soldier who singly formed square to receive the charge of the enemy), Nejed was to resist and conquer all the infidel fleets of Baḥreyn, 'Omān, and England united, should they madly venture an attack. This important vessel, squadron, or navy, was in size equal to an ordinary Newcastle collier, and about as well fitted for warlike manœuvres, judging by the exquisite clumsiness of her build. However "the natives" looked on her with great dread, and never mentioned her but in an undertone. She was now getting her masts in, and completing her other fittings.

Barakāt and I sat still to gaze, speculating on the difference between the two sides of Arabia. But our companions, like true Arabs, thought it high time for "refreshment," and accordingly began their enquiries at the castle gate where the governor might be, and whether he was to be spoken to. When, behold! the majesty of Feyṣul's vicegerent issuing in person from his palace to visit the new man-of-war. My abolitionist friends will be gratified to learn that this exalted dignitary is, no less than he of Hofhoof, a negro, brought up from a curly-headed imp to a woolly-headed black in Feyṣul's own palace, and now governor of the most important harbour owned by Nejed on the Persian Gulf, and of the town once capital of that fierce dynasty which levelled the Ca'abah with the dust, and filled Ḳaṭeef with the plunder of Yemen and Syria. Farḥāt, to give him his proper name, common among those of his complexion, was a fine tall negro of about fifty years old, good-natured, chatty, hospitable, and furnished with perhaps a trifle more than the average amount of negro intellect.

Aboo-'Eysa, who had friends and acquaintances everywhere, and whose kindly manner made him always a special favourite with negroes high or low, had furnished us with an introductory letter to Farḥāt, intended to make matters smooth for our future route. But as matters went there was little need of caution. The fortunate coincidence of a strong north wind, just then blowing down the Gulf, gave a satisfactory reason for not embarking on board of a Baṣrah cruiser, while it rendered a voyage to Baḥreyn, our real object, equally specious and easy. Besides Farḥāt himself, who was a good easy-going sort of man, had hardly opened Aboo-'Eysa's note, than without more ado he bade us



a hearty welcome, ordered our luggage to be brought within the castle precincts, and requested us to step in ourselves and take a cup of coffee, awaiting his return for further conversation after his daily visit of inspection to Feyṣul's abridged fleet.

We now stood within the palace, a building ascribed by tradition to Aboo-Sa'eed-el-Djenābee, or Ḳarmooṭ, himself, though I can hardly believe it to be in reality of so ancient a date, and should rather assign it to the sixth or seventh century of Islam. This appears from the style of architecture here employed, much lighter and more elegant than what few relics we possess of the third century after the Hejirah; and secondly, from the great extent and lavish ornament of the edifice, more accordant with the works of long-established power than with the first years of a new and revolutionary dynasty, which had yet everything to acquire and do. Perhaps part of the foundations and the lower storey may be due to the Djenābee, while his successors have completed the superstructure.

It is worth remarking, that although the arch is known and is continually employed in Ḥaṣa, vaulting is not equally so, except in its most simple or barrel form: the same may be said of the covered passages yet existing in the castle of Djowf; they too exhibit only barrel-vaulting. The palace of Ḳarmooṭ was accordingly the first building which we had seen, since our departure from Gaza, in which cross or rib-vaulting appeared, a decided advance in architectural science, and henceforward to be met with repeatedly in Baḥreyn, on the Persian coast, and in 'Omān. In the two latter districts, a further progress in constructive skill is signalized by the frequency of the dome or cupola, formed by concentric ranges of brick or stone shaped to the double curve; all phenomena indicative of foreign art and influence. For the Arabs when left to themselves appear never to have been architects enough to put even a simple arch together, much less a vault or a dome; and their unassisted edifices in Shomer, Ḳaseem, and Nejed, whether ancient or modern, afford sufficient proof of this strange ignorance or neglect. But when once taught by the sight of Greek or Persian building, they readily copied the superior models of Irān and Syria, till they became themselves tolerable, but never first-rate, constructors. The relics of Ḥimyarite labour in Ḥaḍra-

maut, at Naḳab-el-Ḥajjār for example, or elsewhere, belong to a different race, namely, the Abyssinian.

Barakāt and I were soon introduced into the K'hāwah, and seated there, while a blazing fire of palm-wood dispelled the damp chill of these old ruins. The furniture was tolerably good, and the coffee excellent. Farḥāt now came back from his walk, and entered with us into animated discourse about Rī'ad, Feyṣul, 'Abd-Allah, the siege of 'Oneyzah, and so forth.

A good supper was brought in, fish and flesh ; and after it had been concluded in due form by coffee and fumigation, Farḥāt, with a delicacy of politeness which almost surprised us, said that our luggage had been already taken upstairs, into a room prepared for our reception, and that, as we were doubtless tired, we might perhaps wish to follow it. Nay, he took the very civilized precaution of having us lighted up the steps—a measure not in the least superfluous, considering the dilapidated state of the staircase ; it was of stone, but ruinous and neglected.

My readers may, like ourselves, be somewhat amazed at such excess of courtesies from such a personage. But nothing happens on earth without a reason, and there was a sufficient one for this. My old patient Djowhar, after regaining his health, had passed by Ḳaṭeef when on his way to Baḥreyn. Received with all the honour due to a lord-treasurer, he had during his stay in the castle indoctrinated his brother negro with so favourable an idea regarding us, that Farḥāt would have done anything to please. Indeed, he proceeded this very first evening to render us the greatest service in his power, by having diligent enquiries made whether any vessel or boat was shortly to sail for Baḥreyn, promising us the first departure should be ours. We thanked him, and followed the lamp up the winding stairs, where we found our quarters.

The next day passed, partly in Farḥāt's K'hāwah, partly in strolling about the castle, town, gardens, and beach, making meanwhile random enquiries after boats and boatmen. Ḳaṭeef offers what might almost be called a violent contrast to the general features of Arabia. The rank luxuriance of its garden vegetation surpasses by much the best watered spots about Hofhoof, and the heavy foliage drooping in the heavy air aroused in me remembrances of a rainy season in the Concan,

and sensations which had been sleeping for many a year. The town itself, damp and dingy as it is, offers little to invite visitors.

It was noon when we fell in with a ship-captain ready to sail that very night, wind and tide permitting. Farḥāt's men had spoken with him, and he readily offered to take us on board. We then paid a visit to the custom-house officer to settle the embarkation dues for men and goods. This foreman of the Ma'asher, whether in accordance with orders from Farḥāt, or of his own free will and inclination, I know not, proved wonderfully gracious, and declared that to take a farthing of duty from such useful servants of the public as doctors, would be "sheyn w' khaṭā'," "shame and sin." Alas, that European custom-house officials should be far removed from such generous and patriotic sentiments! Lastly, of his own accord he furnished us with men to carry our baggage through knee-deep water and thigh-deep mud to the little cutter, where she lay some fifty yards from shore. Evening now came on, and Farḥāt sent for us, to congratulate us, but with a polite regret, on having found so speedy conveyance for our voyage. Meanwhile he let us understand how he was himself invited for the evening to supper with a rich merchant of the town, and that we were expected to join the party; nor need that make us anxious about our passage, since our ship-captain was also invited, nor could the vessel possibly sail before the full tide at midnight.

Accordingly, after sunset we all went in great state, the governor at our head, to the house of our evening's entertainer. It was a fine three-storeyed dwelling, where the furniture and domestic arrangements, the small rooms, the profusion of carpets, with little knick-knacks of childish ornament, bespoke a Persian much more than an Arab taste. Nargheelahs stood ready in a side-closet for whoever might require them; and while Farḥāt, his principal retainers, and ourselves were seated on the cushioned divan, we were drenched all round, "thrice and once," with rose-water, and regaled with tea in pretty china cups presented by well-dressed serving-lads with the grace of Shirāz and Ispahan. The conversation was however dull—principally on bales of cloth and sacks of rice; the townsmen, who composed two-thirds of the assembly, having little interest in the affairs of Ri'ad and 'Oneyzah, except precisely what it was better to con-

ceal than to display, while Farḥāt and his men observed the gravity befitting true believers when in the presence of free-thinkers and infidels. The supper was long in going by; it mustered four or five courses, with small Persian side-dishes of sweet but unknown materials; an endless circulation of tea-cups complicated the business, and we did not rise till near midnight. Farḥāt then wished us a prosperous journey, and insisted on receiving a letter from Baṣrah to assure him of our safe arrival there. This letter I never sent, for the simple reason that, more shame for me, I never once recalled to mind his courteous request till this very moment, (July 20th, 1864) when, seated on the shore of a German lake amid pines and beeches, I am conjuring up to memory the muddy coast and dense palm-groves of Kaṭeef. “*Tempora mutantur*,” and I may well add, “*et nos mutamur in illis*.” Be it so; the outer shell may vary, but the kernel of human life is everywhere much the same.

From our town supper we returned by torchlight to the castle; our baggage, no great burden, had been already taken down to the sea gate, where stood two of the captain’s men waiting for us. In their company we descended to the beach, and then with garments tucked up to the waist waded to the vessel, not without difficulty, for the tide was rapidly coming in, and we had almost to swim for it. At last we reached the ship, and scrambled up her side; most heartily glad was I to find myself at sea once more on the other side of Arabia.



## CHAPTER XII

## BAHREYN, KAṬAR, AND 'OMĀN

When the night is left behind  
 In the dim West, dim and blind,  
 And the blue noon is over us,  
 And the multitudinous  
 Billows murmur at our feet,  
 Where the Earth and Ocean meet;  
 And all things seem only one  
 In the universal sun.

*Shelley*

*Islands of Bahreyn—Moḥarreḡ and Menāmah—Their Appearance—Landing at Menāmah—Our First Day there—We take Lodgings—A Bahreyn Dwelling—Aboo-'Eysa Arrives—Scheme for Visiting 'Omān—Yoosef-ebn-Khamees—A Separation—Passage to Moḥarreḡ—We Embark for Kaṭar—Coasts of Bahreyn and Kaṭar—Bedaa'—Description of Kaṭar—Its Fisheries—Menāṣeer Bedouins—Watch-towers—Mohammed-ebn-Thānee—His Residence and Character—Departure from Kaṭar—A Ship and Crew of Barr-fāris—Sea Hospitality—A Gale—Landing at Charak—A Visit to the Chief—Latest News from 'Oneyzah—Subsequent Fate of that Town and of Zāmil—A Walk about Charak—We Embark for Linja—Landing at Linja—The Town—Do'eyj and his House—Departure for Sharjah—Two Days on Aboo-Moosa.*

HAVING now reached regions which, though I cannot hope they will be familiar to most of my readers, yet have been described by other travellers, my narrative will move with a more rapid pace. Our captain, Moleyk, welcomed us on board his craft, and made up a round of coffee without delay. We inhaled our pipes in the delightful assurance of being at last out of Wāhhā-bee territory, and beyond the reach of all “no smoking allowed” regulations, and then, in nautical phrase, “turned in” under the shelter of a large deck-cabin near the stern, where we soon fell sound asleep; undisturbed, at least for my part, by all the

running, trampling, and shouting of the sailors getting our ship under weigh.

Our voyage was delayed by twenty-four hours' detention off the village of Soweẏk, where we took in a young chief of the El-Khaleefah family, on a visit to his uncle Moḥammed, the present governor of Baḥreyn. But after some three days on board, we came in sight of Baḥreyn, and by evening were close under the two islands which bear that name. The southern island is much the larger, and is therefore often called Baḥreyn to the exclusion of its northern companion, which more commonly bears the name of Moḥarreḳ, from the capital situated on its southern side. This town lies like a long white strip on the shore of the channel that separates it from the town of Menāmah, whose buildings occupy a corresponding position on the northerly marge of the larger island. Thus these two seaports look each other in the face, somewhat like Dover and Calais, though fortunately for them with friendlier feelings, since in case of war no Boulogne fleet would be required to cross the Baḥreyn channel. Moḥarreḳ is far the prettier of the two to the eye, with its white houses, set off by darker palm-huts (for the extreme mildness of the climate renders this mode of habitation very common, and almost desirable), the large low palaces of the Khaleefah family, and two or three imposing forts close to the sea-shore.

Menāmah, though larger in extent than Moḥarreḳ, has a less showy appearance; it is a centre of commerce, as its *vis-à-vis* is of government; and hence has fewer palaces to present, and less display of defensive architecture. However, near its western extremity, a large square mass of white building, with a few cannon arranged battery-like in front, announces the residence of 'Alee, brother of Moḥammed, vice-governor of Menāmah, and wiser than his kinsman, if report be true. Little is to be seen of the town itself on a sea approach; the first range of dwellings and warehouses shuts out the rest from view; and, except the palace of 'Alee, no other edifice of importance stands near the water's edge.

Wearing slowly up with a side wind, we anchored before Moḥarreḳ, a little after sunset. The arrival of strangers, many or few, from north or south, is an every-hour occurrence here; and a passing look, or a chance "good-morrow," was all the

notice taken of us by the many who thronged the landing-place. Having hopes that Aboo-'Eysa might have preceded us hither, we made for the nearest and largest coffee-house, where, as in barbers' shops of old, news and new comers are of right to be sought and found. It was now eight good months since we had last sat in a public coffee-house, and that in the suburbs of Ghazzah (or Gaza), of Palestine; the rest of our journey having been through lands too backward in civilization or too forward in bigotry, or both one and the other, to admit of such establishments. But Baḥreyn is beyond the Wahnābee circle, and breathes the atmosphere, so to speak, of Baṣrah and Persia. We gladly took our seats on the high matted benches, amid turbaned townsmen and gaily-dressed shopkeepers, to enquire about the latest arrivals from the port of 'Ajeyr, whence Aboo-'Eysa was to embark, according to our parting agreement. Meanwhile the white-vested waiter prepared and presented our coffee, after filling the huge Nargheelahs here in use with the strong 'Omān tobacco, the bugbear of Ri'āḍ; but here *nous avons changé tout cela*.

No news was however to be learnt touching our friend; and we had now to think how and where to find a berth for passing the time of our sojourn, till he should arrive from Ḥaṣa. This was not an easy quest. Baḥreyn, like most eastern localities, has no inns properly speaking; and the Khāns, which here as elsewhere apologize for that deficiency, had too unpromising and insecure a look to allow the fixing our residence in any one of them. For many hours we sought in vain where to establish ourselves. At last we entered a pretty coffee-house, much like a "Sailors' Home" in situation near the beach, in size and style of customers. Its owner, a very civil man, took our cause in hand, ordered his head man to supply his place awhile, and went in quest of quarters for us, taking Barakāt along with him, while I remained behind to chat with sailors and gaze at the sea through a disorganized telescope fixed in the look-out. About nightfall, we were conducted to the desired spot. Here we entered by a narrow door, and found ourselves in a large open enclosure of palm-branches about eight feet high, set in the ground side by side and closely interwoven; within the enclosure, and divided from each other by a little space, stood two long palm-leaf huts; one for us, the

other was the abode of our sailor and his family. Our dwelling was about thirty feet in length by ten in breadth, with as much to the top of the sloping thatch-roof; a hurdle-like screen divided the interior into two unequal compartments; the lesser served for a store-room, the greater for habitation. The floor was strewn, the general custom here, with a thick layer of very small shells; over this a large reed mat had been spread. We made our preliminary arrangements for beautifying and fitting up the apartment, and were soon honoured by the presence of the proprietor himself, who from his pretty brick and plaster house close by came to see us installed, while his servants brought according to custom the introductory supper of rice, fish, shrimps, and vegetables for the new guests. Of course we invited our good-natured friends, to whose diligence we owed this shelter, to partake of our meal; and we all passed together a very pleasant evening, with a feeling of security and calm such as we had hardly known since our first departure from Jaffa.

Next morning we renewed our search after Aboo-'Eysa, but to no purpose. Not a single arrival from 'Ajeyr for many days past, and the north wind still prevailed, and precluded all chance so long as it should last. It was now the 28th December, 1862, and we were destined to wait in daily hope and daily disappointment till the 8th January following.

During the twelve days that we awaited the arrival of Aboo-'Eysa, we passed most of our time in the various coffee-houses, and especially in that called a few pages back the "Sailors' Home," whose owner had so obligingly aided us at our first arrival, where our hours went by less tediously than they often do with strangers in a foreign land. From the maritime and in a manner central position of Bahreyn, my readers may of themselves conjecture that the profound ignorance of Nejed regarding Europeans and their various classifications is here exchanged for a partial acquaintance with those topics; thus, "English" and "French," disfigured into the local "Ingleez" and "Fransees," are familiar words in Menāmah, though Germans and Italians, whose vessels seldom or never visit these seas, have as yet no place in the Bahreyn vocabulary; while Dutch and Portuguese seem to have fallen into total oblivion. But Russians, or "Moscôp" (that is, Muscovites), are alike known and feared,



thanks to Persian intercourse and the instinct of nations. Beside, the policy of Constantinople and Teheran are freely and at times sensibly discussed in these coffee-houses, no less than the stormy diplomacy of Nejed and her dangerous encroachments; ship news, commerce, business, tales of foreign lands, and occasionally literature, supply the rest of the conversation.

Of the local governor and the men of state we saw little; indeed we avoided them as much as possible, and even declined a chance invitation from 'Alee to his palace; thinking it enough knowledge of the Bahreyn El-Khaleefahs to hear "their evil report;" nor do I imagine that a nearer acquaintance with them would have brought us to a more favourable opinion:

At last, on the 6th of January, 1863, the wind veered to the south, and on the 9th of the month our long-expected Aboo-'Eysa arrived, with a squadron of retainers. Schemes were formed and discussed, rejected or revised, till at last we agreed on adopting a plan sketched out by our friend while with us in his Hofhoof retirement, and in furtherance of which a large part of the wares he now brought with him had been purchased. This plan was not a bad one, though circumstances beyond the reach of ordinary calculation concurred to render its success less complete than it might otherwise have been.

Aboo-'Eysa had procured above twenty loads of the best Haṣa dates, the genuine Khalāṣ, well packed in oblong rush-cases, and at the same time he had given order for four handsome mantles of Hofhoof manufacture, woven and embroidered by the most skilful hands: three for presentation to an equal number of chiefs whose domains lay between Bahreyn and Mascat; the fourth and costliest garment for the Sultan of 'Omān himself, in acknowledgment of patronage afforded our friend on a former occasion. Meantime I was to accompany the gifts and their bearer under the scientific character of a deep-read physician, on the look-out for I know not what herbs and drugs, which I was to suppose discoverable in the south-eastern regions; and when, under covert of the introduction thus obtained, and the good will likely to ensue, I had succeeded in sufficiently examining the land and the people, I was to return to Aboo-Shahr, where I should find Barakāt arrived long before with Aboo-'Eysa. For this latter had about three months

to pass at the above-mentioned town, while getting his pilgrims together, and preparing for their journey across Arabia to Mecca. Barakāt, so said Aboo-'Eysa, could not safely accompany me; much less could he take my place.

Yoosef-ebn-Khamees, for that was the name of my destined associate, was a very curious individual, and not unlike some of Shakespeare's supplementary characters. He was a native of Haṣa, half a jester and half a knave; witty, reckless, hare-brained to the last degree, full of jocose or pathetic stories, of poetry, traditions, and fun of every description, whether coarse or delicate. But he had one sterling quality, which in an affair like the present more than counterbalanced whatever weighed in the opposite scale, namely a boundless attachment, a real devotion to Aboo-'Eysa, not inferior to that of Evan Maccombich to Fergus, or of Caleb to Ravenswood. The origin of this feeling was not however in kith and kin; it was due simply to Aboo-'Eysa's singular kindheartedness and liberality, which had rescued Yoosef from utter poverty, and had maintained him for a considerable time past in a decent and even honourable position. He was now about thirty-six years of age, tall, and (notwithstanding a slightly comical turn of features) handsome, with a little black beard where some prematurely grey hairs, the result of horror on seeing an unlucky comrade killed by his side in the Bahreyn battle, contrasted oddly with his youthful appearance, and gave occasion to many a jest of others against him, and of him against himself. For Yoosef, like Falstaff of old, was "not only witty in himself, but the cause that wit was in other men;" although in physical conformation he was the very reverse of our own jovial knight, being remarkably slim and slender in form.

Matters having been arranged on this footing, we awaited a favourable occasion for putting to sea. But the wind was adverse, and day by day dragged on till the 23rd of January, when a southerly breeze and a good ship combined to carry off Aboo-'Eysa and his retainers, with Barakāt, to Aboo-Shahr, while Yoosef and I were to cross the channel next day for Moḥarreḡ, and there embark for the port of Bedaa' on the coast of Katar, where resided Moḥammed-ebn-Thānee, the first and nearest of the chiefs to whom our visit and our presents were addressed.

One of those presentiments which are not so uniformly ex-

plicable as frequently experienced by human creatures, regarding the shipwreck which in fact lay before me, led me to entrust Barakāt with the keeping of all my papers, notes, and whatever I had of any value, except a small stock of money to meet the emergencies of the journey.

It was a fair and sunshiny afternoon when, after many good wishes for a speedy meeting, and mutual recommendations, as wont among parting friends, we separated—Aboo-'Eysa, accompanied by his retainers and Barakāt, going on board their schooner for Aboo-Shahr, while Yoosef-ebn-Khamees and myself remained to keep house, and passed the evening in comparative silence. I felt uncommonly lonely; but the hope of an interesting and well-occupied journey, followed by a prompt and successful return, went far to console me. Yoosef too, though as melancholy as “a gib-cat or a lugged bear” at the departure of his patron, beguiled his fancy by prognosticating a prosperous voyage for Aboo-'Eysa, without sea-sickness or danger. But hope deceived us both.

Next morning we took a small boat, and crossed over to Moharreḳ. Just off the Castle-point lay our bark, ill-built, ill-rigged, and ill-manned; but these defects mattered little, as we did not intend to take her farther than Kāṭar, a short sail; besides, any ship, however slight, if but guided by a knowing pilot, may venture almost fearlessly on the quiet waters of this bay, to which the Arabs have given the name of “Baḥr-ul-Benāt,” or “the Girls' Sea;” whether from visions of mermaids—here, no less than the “Cacquets” of Brest, the object of popular credulity; or perhaps from the gentle, peaceful, and smiling character of the bay itself. We put our goods and chattels on board, recommended them to the care of the captain, an “old old man, with beard,” which should have been “as white as snow” had it but been better washed and combed; and after receiving his assurance that all would be ready for sailing next morning at sunrise, we returned to the town. Here a storm (from which Aboo-'Eysa, as we learnt near three months later, suffered greatly) delayed us. On the morning of the 26th we went on board. Our ship, in size equal to a small brig, was full of live stock; passengers of all ages and sexes, but of low condition, bound for Kāṭar, six or eight sailors, and some scores of sheep to keep us company. (N.B. No cabin.) Yoosef and I took possession

of the highest and most dignified post, that on deck near the stern, and a little before noon we got under weigh. The sea was still roughish, and my companion sea-sick—Nelson was so occasionally, I believe ; for myself, I enjoyed an immunity from that annoyance, purchased by many voyages and much rough weather on the ocean.

On the 29th we entered Bedaa', the principal town of Katar at the present day, and the miserable capital of a miserable province. To have an idea of Katar, my readers must figure to themselves miles on miles of low barren hills, bleak and sun-scorched, with hardly a single tree to vary their dry monotonous outline: below these a muddy beach extends for a quarter of a mile seaward in slimy quicksands, bordered by a rim of sludge and seaweed. If we look landwards beyond the hills, we see what by extreme courtesy may be called pasture land, dreary downs with twenty pebbles for every blade of grass ; and over this melancholy ground scene, but few and far between, little clusters of wretched, most wretched, earth cottages and palm-leaf huts, narrow, ugly, and low ; these are the villages, or rather the "towns" (for so the inhabitants style them), of Katar. Yet poor and naked as is the land, it has evidently something still poorer and nakeder behind it, something in short even more devoid of resources than the coast itself, and the inhabitants of which seek here by violence what they cannot find at home. For the villages of Katar are each and all carefully walled in, while the downs beyond are lined with towers, and here and there a castle "huge and square" makes with its little windows and narrow portals a display of strength hardly less, so it might seem, superfluous than the Tower of London in the nineteenth century. But these castles are in reality by no means superfluous, for Katar has wealth in plenty, and there are robbers against whom that wealth must be guarded.

Whence comes this wealth amid so much apparent poverty, and in what does it consist ? What I have just described is, so to speak, nothing but the heaps of rubbish and the rubbishy miners' huts about the shaft's mouth ; close by is the mine itself, a rich and never-failing store. This mine is no other than the sea, no less kindly a neighbour to the inhabitants of Katar than their dry land is a niggard host. In this bay are the



best, the most copious pearl-fisheries of the Persian Gulf, and in addition an abundance almost beyond belief of whatever other gifts the sea can offer or bring. It is from the sea accordingly, not from the land, that the natives of Katar subsist, and it is also mainly on the sea that they dwell, passing amid its waters the one half of the year in search of pearls, the other half in fishery or trade. Hence their real homes are the countless boats which stud the placid pool, or stand drawn up in long black lines on the shore; while little care is taken to ornament their land houses, the abodes of their wives and children at most, and the unsightly strong-boxes of their gathered treasures. "We are all from the highest to the lowest slaves of one master, Pearl," said to me one evening Moḥammed-ebn-Thānee, chief of Bedaa'; nor was the expression out of place. All thought, all conversation, all employment, turns on that one subject; everything else is mere by-game, and below even secondary consideration.

But if the people of Katar have peace within, they are exposed on the land side to continual marauding inroads from their Bedouin neighbours, the Menāseer and Aāl-Morraḥ. Hence the necessity for the towers of refuge which line the uplands: they are small circular buildings from twenty-five to thirty feet in height, each with a door about half-way up the side and a rope hanging out; by this compendious ladder the Katar shepherds, when scared by a sudden attack, clamber up for safety into the interior of the tower, and once there draw in the rope after them, thus securing their own lives and persons at any rate, whatever may become of their cattle. For to scale a wall fifteen feet high is an exploit beyond the ingenuity of the most skilful Bedouin.

On landing at Bedaa' we went right to the castle, a donjon-keep, with outhouses at its foot, offering more accommodation for goods than for men. Under a mat-spread and mat-hung shed within the court sat the chief, Moḥammed-ebn-Thānee, a shrewd wary old man, slightly corpulent, and renowned for prudence and good-humoured easiness of demeanour, but close-fisted and a hard customer at a bargain; altogether, he had much more the air of a business-like avaricious pearl-merchant (and such he really is), than of an Arab ruler. Round him were placed many sallow-featured individuals, their skins sod-

dened by frequent sea-diving, and their faces wrinkled into computations and accounts. However, Ebn-Thānee, though eminently a "practical" man, had thus far put his sedentary habits to intellectual profit, that by dint of study he had rendered himself a tolerable proficient in literary and poetical knowledge, and took great pleasure in discussing topics of this nature. Nay, he even pretended to have some medical skill, and did I think really possess about the same amount of it that many an old woman may boast of in a country village of Lancashire or Essex. Besides, he liked a joke, and could give and take one with a good grace.

He enquired about my journey. I replied that I had no special business on hand for Katar, and that I was merely on my way to Mascat in search of herbs and drugs. He apologized for want of room to lodge us suitably in the palace itself. I cast a look round its narrow precincts and loop-holed stone walls, and fully accepted the excuse. Ebn-Thānee had by anticipation caused a warehouse close by to be emptied of the dates it held, and fitted up in Katar style for our reception; that is, mats were spread, and nothing more. We of course expressed due thanks for hospitality here regarded as munificent, drank coffee, talked awhile, and retired.

It was ten days before we could arrange to quit Bedaa'. Some excursions to neighbouring places helped me to fill up the time, and enlarge my acquaintance with the district. Having decided to go by sea, and thus make direct for Sharjah, the first considerable town situated within the territory of 'Omān Proper, a worthy young sea-captain, native of Charak, on the opposite Persian coast, offered us his ship and services. We made our parting arrangements, and on February 6, while a lovely evening promised a fair morrow, and a light west wind seemed to ensure us a good and speedy passage to Sharjah, we took our leave of Moḥammed-ebn-Thānee, who had now become very intimate in his way, said adieu to three or four other friends acquired at Bedaa', and entrusted ourselves to a little boat, wherein Fāris, to give our captain his proper name, with his younger brother Aḥmed and two of the crew, had come to fetch us off to the schooner. She was large and well built, provided with an elegant captain's cabin, a fore-cabin, and other nautical arrangements; in fine, she was infinitely superior to the miserable craft

in which we had left Bahreyn. She was built for quick sailing, with two masts, large lateen sails, and a jib; her stern and prow were prettily carved; indeed the latter surmounted the waves with a sea-nymph figure-head; a token of non-compliance with the Islamitic prohibition, which excludes the representation of whatever has life from the sphere of ornamental art.

When we got on board, the crew, all of them cousins to each other seventh remove, and relations of the captain himself, received us very heartily. It is the custom on most Gulf ships that passengers, of high or low degree, no matter, are looked upon as the captain's own guests for the voyage, and as such have a right to his table and fare, free of extra charge. My readers will have remarked long before this, that in the East the relative position of travellers, whether by land or sea, and of those who conduct them, has a very intimate, nay almost a family character; all are considered as forming one moving household during the journey or voyage. Nor are the links thus united wholly broken by separation at the journey's end; the title of a special friendship and fellowship remains for years, and may be claimed afresh by either party whenever need or good will suggests, nor can such claim be decently rejected. The reasons of this are too obvious for explanation; railways and other wholesale means of communication do away with these feelings, by removing the causes which produce them in uncivilized countries.

A violent south-easter soon seized us; we drove before it, and when morning dawned over the tossing waves we were far away from the direction of Sharjah, and had entered on the deep waters known by the name of "Ghubbat-Fāris," or the "Persian depth," beyond the prospect of returning to Kāṭar, or of reaching 'Omān, and on the contrary rapidly approaching the northern coast. Our captain attempted many nautical manœuvres to bring the ship about, but in vain, and he was at last obliged to give up the trial, and to make straight for Barr-Fāris. After some hours the huge rounded outline of Djebel Atranjah, or "the Citron mountain," which overtops the bay of Charak itself, rose before us, and soon we had the whole line of the Persian coast in view.

It contrasts strongly with the Arabian. Its mountains are lofty, often two thousand feet in height, rough in outline, yet

less barren than the Arab coast-range. In some places the crags come right down to the sea ; in others a shore strip, ploughed up by violent winter torrents, but with no perennial stream to water it, extends two or three miles back towards the interior, till it is lost within the mountain gorges. One wide and romantic-looking pass, a little to the east, behind Charak, leads to Shirāz; and by this road the invading armies of Persia have often descended on Barr-Fāris. The mountain sides are thinly sprinkled with fig-trees, orange-trees, and other wood vegetation ; here and there is a streak of scanty tillage ; in the plain below are palm-groves, but meagre and unproductive, with just enough of other cultivation to keep the inhabitants from famine.

Next morning the wind proved still unfavourable, and precluded sailing. To pass the time, Fāris took us in his company to pay a visit of politeness to the local chief, 'Abd-el-'Azeez-el-Meṭeyree. We found him highly excited by good news fresh come from 'Oneyzah. For the first time since our departure from Ri'ad, we now got hold of important tidings respecting that fated town. I will here relate what 'Abd-el-'Azeez told us, and then take occasion to add a brief recital of the events which followed soon after ; events melancholy in themselves, and precursors of much mischief.

Having at last gathered together his forces, about the middle of December, Feysul gave the signal, and 'Abd-Allah set out, leading with him the entire force of Ḥaṣa, besides the troops of 'Aareḍ, and whatever else remained behind from the central and southern provinces ; thus mustering a body of fifteen thousand men or near it ; a force which, when added to the besieging army already in the field, must have amounted to twenty-three or twenty-four thousand regular troops at least, besides four or five thousand Bedouins, who after long wavering which side to take, now prudently determined to join the certain winner. 'Oneyzah was thus left to her own unaided resources, which might come up to four thousand fighting men at the utmost.

After much skirmishing, a decisive battle was fought in January. Zāmil and El-Khey'yāt are said to have performed prodigies of valour, and 'Abd-Allah was near being surrounded and killed, as it is much to be regretted that he was not in good



earnest. But where the combatants are in the respective proportions of five to one, a drawn battle is for the less numerous party hardly better than a defeat; and the men of 'Oneyzah, now fully aware of the overwhelming superiority of the enemy, and that they themselves could in consequence but ill afford the loss of a single man, shut themselves up within their walls, and were blockaded in form.

So stood affairs when 'Abd-el-'Azeez gave us what was then the latest information. The rest I learnt in April, when on the point of leaving the confines of Arabia for Bagdad. After more than a month of close siege, the outer walls first, and then the inner, gave way before the Wahnābee artillery, and the town was taken by assault. The inhabitants fought to the last; when all hope was over, Zāmil and Khey'yāt cut their way through the assailants, and escaped to a southern refuge in Wadi Nejrān, where they are believed to be yet concealed from the vengeance of the conqueror. But seven hundred from among the principal citizens of 'Oneyzah were slaughtered on the spot, besides a promiscuous massacre of the common people; and the fated town was plundered and utterly ruined, not to rise again so long as the Wahnābee should be master of the land.

We drank coffee and left the audience. Fāris, with much politeness and a certain feeling of good taste not common in the East, proposed to take me a walk about the town, and to show me whatever in it was worth the seeing. This was not much; however, my cicerone pointed out to me the broken traces of the old outer walls, and indicated their course amid fields and trees, with all the interest of the Antiquary at the Prætorium of Kaimprunes. Hence he led me to the foot of the small marly cone on whose summit frowns a dismantled round tower, a rival of our own Norfolk Caistor Castle in form and size.

The rest of the day passed in enquiries how to continue our journey. Little traffic exists between Barr-Fāris and Sharjah, whither we now desired to direct our course, and we were in consequence advised to take passage on board a ship of Chiro, then lying in the Charak harbour. Putting to sea next day, February 10th, about midnight we were in the bay of Linja or Linya, where countless lights gleaming from the shore cheered the darkness, and made me long for the discoveries of dawn.

Day came at last, and showed us anchored at some two hundred yards from land ; between it and us lay a mass of shipping, large and small ; a theatre of white houses amid trees and gardens lined the coast far away on either side of the harbour.

On the morning of February 11th we came ashore. Since the epoch when Sultan Sa'eed made this place his own, and rendered it a free port, exempt from all custom-house exactions, a slight harbour-duty alone excepted, Linja has rapidly risen in importance, and has of late years attained five times the size of its former self under Persian misgovernment and extortion. Another source of its actual prosperity is the wise toleration which, in accordance with the principles of 'Omānee administration, has replaced Shiya'ee narrow-mindedness, and attracted numerous residents. In consequence, new houses, indicating by their lighter construction recent well-being, run far east and west along the bay, or reach back towards the mainland, till it requires an hour or more to walk at an even pace from one end of their range to the other. Opposite the dock rises a jutting rock, almost the only one hereabouts ; it is crowned by an old castle and tower of mediæval look, now ungarrisoned, for Thōweyne sensibly trusts rather to wooden than to stone walls for the defence of his sea-ports. The palace of the 'Omānee governor, a lad of twenty or thereabouts, by name Seyf, and native of the Bāṭinah, stands farther east ; it forms a large square, four storeys high, with ogive windows and much Persian ornament ; its general effect reminded me of some old town-halls on the Continent, particularly in Belgium and Flanders. Farther on are several shipwright yards, where many vessels are in active progress of construction ; some of them were of large size, and, so far as I could reduce the computations of this country to English measure, of about a hundred and fifty to two hundred tons burden. The shipwrights themselves are often Indians from the Bombay side.

Yoosef went to look out for a lodging for both of us, and I remained awhile seated at the foot of the old ruined tower already mentioned, to contemplate the first scene of unmixed prosperity that I had beheld since my first entrance on Central Arabia and to long for the return of my companion, with tidings

of a lodging and a breakfast. These he brought at last; and with him came a pug-nosed, thickset, good-natured young fellow, whose grimed hands and soot-stained dress announce him for a blacksmith. Do'eyj, for such is his name (identical by the way with the Doeg of David's time, so little does the East change), is a native of Haşa, but long since established here in his honest and profitable calling. He purposes to have us both to board and lodging, and now comes to present his compliments in person, and invite me to accompany him to his Vulcanian abode. Here we passed three days, waiting for a change of wind to bear us to Sharjah. There was neither necessity nor thought of calling on the governor Seyf; Linja is a commercial town, a sea-port, part and parcel of the great world where everyone comes and goes for himself, and no one seeks acquaintance with others, except for some special reason and purport. In the enchanted circle of Arabia, where all dance on since four thousand years at least in the same magic ring, never overstepping its limits, nor enlarging it to admit a foreign measure, chiefs, sultans, governors, and the other "dons" of the land, are not to be passed by without receiving the honour of a salutation, and without conferring in return the ostentatious tokens of their greatness in the form of hospitality; a very "patriarchal" but nowise business-like proceeding. Once without that magic circle, we, like the rest, followed the world's tide, which carries everyone forward on his own line, straight be it or crooked, but unblended with the track of those around, except where the eddy of pleasure or profit whirls them for the hour together.

On the 16th of the month we made sail a little after noon, in a ship bound for Sharjah. At dawn we were off the rocky island of Aboo-Moosa (mutilated into Bomosa in many maps—a fair example of what Arab words become in the mouths of English sea-captains), and here our skipper resolved to anchor, for the waves ran high, and to continue our voyage would have compromised the lives of the fleecy survivors. We sought out a little creek, and there anchored to await calmer weather.

A high conical peak five or six hundred feet in elevation and of volcanic appearance, some ridges of basaltic rock, and the rest of the island composed of ups and downs covered with grass and brushwood—such is Aboo-Moosa; its total length

being about five miles, and its breadth between two and three. At its south-western corner are found a few brackish wells; thus provided, Aboo-Moosa is not an unfrequent shelter and temporary abode for crews in sea-chances like our own, though the only regular inhabitants of the island are wild-fowl and conies. The eastern side of the island, on which we had cast anchor, presents many points of retreat; the western is iron-bound, and the waves now broke on it in white foam. Far off over the sea to the south-west we could just distinguish a dim dream of rocks belonging to Şeer, an island in the Pearl Bay.

The comparative solitude of the place produced a great effect on the imaginative mind of my companion Yoosef, unaccustomed to such loneliness; and he observed, with a melancholy laugh, "Were all our friends ashore to guess where we are at this moment, would any one of them hit on Aboo-Moosa?" This he said while standing on the shore; for, finding that our stay might be a long one, we had after consultation agreed to swim to land; inasmuch as our craft was moored at some distance from the beach, and had not the advantage of a jolly-boat, or "Djāliboot," as Arabs call it, with a slight modification of the English name. So a jib-sail is here a "Djeeb," a main-mast "Meyānah," a brig "Breek," &c. We carried each on his head, one a carpet, one the coffee-pots, another the cooking utensils, and so forth, till we had enough to establish a complete land encampment high up on the beach opposite the ship.

Two days we made Aboo-Moosa our abode, awaiting a lull in the gale, now favourable, but too strong. To kill the time, we clambered up crags, made friends with the herdsmen and the fishermen, who were no less desirous than ourselves to find some one to talk to, and explored the island from one end to another; while Yoosef, unaware that all that glitters is not gold, collected large bits of spar, here in great plenty, conceiving them to be something very precious. Nay, though it was now mid-February, the mildness of the atmosphere encouraged us to repeated feats of swimming, though we little expected that within a few weeks we should have occasion to bring it to a more serious trial.

“How happily the days of Thalaba went by” in such amicable



society, and amid such varied amusements ! I at any rate had here no business on hand, medical or other, and felt lazily glad when I heard the roar of the breakers announcing from hour to hour the impossibility of leaving our Arab Patmos. However, all things on earth or sea must have an end, and on the evening of the 16th, the sea had calmed into a ripple, under the drooping westerly breeze ; we swam on board again, and before sunset Aboo-Moosa was fading, perhaps for ever, from our retrospective view.

## CHAPTER XIII

## THE COASTS OF 'OMĀN—A SHIPWRECK—FINIS

Yes, I remember well  
 The land of many hues,  
 Whose charms what praise can tell,  
 Whose praise what heart refuse?  
 Sublime, but neither bleak nor bare,  
 Nor misty are the mountains there;  
 Softly sublime, profusely fair,  
 Up to their summits clothed in green,  
 And fruitful as the vales between,  
 They lightly rise  
 And scale the skies,  
 And groves and gardens still abound;  
 For where no shoot  
 Could else take root,  
 The peaks are shelved and terraced round.

H. Taylor

*Arrival at Sharjah—Its Khawr or Harbour—Dispositions of the People—Embarkment on a Ship of Soweik for Soḥār—We arrive at Ormuz—The Island—The Portuguese Fort—Pharos-Tower—Passing Cape Mesandum—Leymah—Scenery and Village—Kalḥaṭ—The Bāṭinah—Landing at Soḥār—Our Host 'Eysa—His House—Domestic Architecture in 'Omān—We embark for Mascat—Coast of the Bāṭinah—Crew and Passengers—Barka—Sowādah Islands—A Sudden Storm—Driving before the Wind—The Ship Founders—Some Escape in the Boat and on a Plank—Further Incidents of the Night—Several more are Drowned—A Desperate Resolution averted—We make for Shore—Loss of the Boat—A Hard Swim—Nine come to Land—Their Conduct—Our Whereabouts—A Dreary Morning—We set out for the Sultan's Palace at Baṭḥat—Farzah—Palace of the Baṭḥah—Thoweynee and his Court—Reception—Good Treatment—Our Boat—Alms Received—Meeting with Two Albanians—Their Story—Details regarding Thoweynee—Our Own Position—Departure from the Baṭḥah—Maṭraḥ—Arrival at Mascat—Our Host—A Friend in Need—A Koweyt Ship—Departure from Mascat—Constellations—Return up the Persian Gulf—A Typhoid Fever—Arrival at Aboo-Shahr—At Baṣrah—Kind Reception on an English Steamer—Arrival at Bagdad—Meeting with Barakāt—Return to Syria—Conclusion.*

ON the morning of the 16th February, 1863, we sighted the 'Omānee coast—long, low, and sandy, but well lined with palm-

groves and villages ranged along the glistening shore. Far in the distance like a cloud rose the heights of Bereymah or Djebel-'Oḳdah; and to the north, another blue day-vision indicated the peaks of Ro'os-el-Djebal, and Cape Mesandum. Our course lay for Sharjah; and, after some tacking and veering, we worked up to the entrance of its harbour, a narrow creek, opening out at right angles into the sea, and then, after some forty yards, turning sharp to run inland, parallel with its parent ocean, for a league and more, much like the line followed by the Yare from Gorleston to Yarmouth—but here the resemblance stops. At the harbour entrance is a bar, to cross which requires skill and experience; beyond the water is perfectly calm, and not very deep; enough indeed for fishing boats and 'long-shore cruisers, but a large ship would not find wherewithal to float her.

Here for the first time we were in what is properly called 'Omān. Putting foot on shore I was strongly reminded of India, and that in more than one particular. A mild mellowness of climate, very different from the brisk air of Toweẏḵ or Shomer, no less than from the heavier atmosphere of Ḥaṣa and Ḳaṭeef; a style of house-building not unlike that of Baroda and Cambay; the dress of the inhabitants, a broad white or fringed cloth wrapped round their loins and reaching down to the knees, a light turban or a coloured Indian handkerchief knotted round the head; their dusky complexion, slim forms, and easy gait—all this, and other peculiarities of nature and art too minute for description, suggested the idea of Guzerat and Cutch rather than of Arabia, and contributed to explain and justify the distinction drawn by the 'Omānees between their country and the rest of the Peninsula. 'Abbas, the sheep-merchant, had constituted himself our host; his house lay amid a labyrinth of lanes and byways, and though within the city walls was constructed of wood and thatch only. But the inside was well furnished and cheerful, and if any deficiencies existed, they were covered by an almost lavish hospitality.

Our hours went by here in a peculiarly friendly manner, in visits, dinners, and suppers; for the natives of Sharjah seemed anxious to make us experience the truth of what I had often heard elsewhere regarding their sociable disposition. The guest in this town finds a much greater variety in the fare set before

him than in Arabia Proper and among Arabs : fish, flesh, prawns, eggs, vermicelli, rice, sweetmeats of all kinds, honey, butter, dates, good leavened bread, and other eatables are placed before him—not piled up in one huge platter after Nejdean fashion, but each placed in its separate dish ; while the repeated invitations to vigorous trencher-work might seem excessive in number and urgency even to a starving man.

On the fourth day we sailed in a small vessel, belonging to a man of Soveyk, to take our chance of fair gales to round Me-sandum and reach the Bāṭinah. We bade a friendly farewell to 'Abbas and others who had accompanied us down to the water's edge, and embarked. It was now near noon, the 20th of February, the flood was in ; “ a light wind blew from the gates of the South,” and out we danced into the green sea.

On the third evening of our north-easterly course we were driven close under Larej, a dreary-looking island, rock-girt and scantily inhabited. Neither landing-place nor safe anchorage was here to be had, so the crew managed to get the ship round Larej, and we now ran before the wind for Ormuz ; the sailors showed more skill in managing the little canvas we could bear than I had given them credit for.

I was not at all sorry to have an opportunity for visiting an island once so renowned for its commerce, and of which its Portuguese occupants used to say, that were the world a golden ring, Ormuz would be the diamond signet. The general appearance of Ormuz indicates an extinguished volcano, and such I believe it really is ; the circumference consists of a wide oval wall formed by steep crags, fireworn and ragged ; these enclose a central basin, where grow shrubs and grass ; the basaltic slopes of the outer barrier run in many places clean down into the sea, amid splinter-like pinnacles and fantastic crags of many colours, like those which lava often assumes on cooling. Between west and north a long triangular promontory, low and level, advances to a considerable distance, and narrows into a neck of land which is terminated by a few rocks and a strong fortress, the work of Portuguese builders, but worthy of taking rank amid Roman ruins—so solid are the walls, so compact the masonry and well-cemented brickwork, against which three long centuries of sea-storm have broken themselves in vain. The greater part of the promontory itself is covered with ruins ; here



stood the once thriving town, now a confused extent of desolate heaps, amid which the vestiges of several fine dwellings, of baths, and of a large church may yet be clearly made out. A solitary Pharos-tower of octangular form, like that of Sharjah, but of more graceful construction, rises at about a hundred yards from the land's end ; it is built of brick and stone arranged in herring-bone patterns. From what I have seen of analogous constructions elsewhere, and particularly between Bagdad and Kerkook, I should think this tower was originally the minaret of a Persian mosque, and that it was subsequently applied by the Portuguese to the purposes of a lighthouse. Close by the fort cluster a hundred or more wretched earth-hovels, the abode of fishermen or shepherds, whose flocks pasture within the crater ; one single shed, where dried dates, raisins, and tobacco are exposed for sale, is all that now remains of the trade of Ormuz.

The storm that had driven us on Ormuz lasted three days, during which period it was impossible to put out. At last the breeze came, and on the morning of the 27th we were once more at sea, and running due south, till we came down opposite to the outer entrance of the Bāb or Gate of Mesandum, through which we had now no longer need to pass. We wore slowly on under the pillar-like rocks (I bethought me of prints seen long since of Fingal's Cave and the Giant's Causeway), and early next morning we put in for an hour or so into a sheltered recess, an inland lake were it not for the very narrow ribbon of water connecting it with the sea.

Next morning dawned for us on a very pretty scene. It was a low shingly beach, behind which a wooded valley stretched far back between the mountains, and ended in deep gorges, also clothed with trees, though the rough granite crags peeped out here and there ; on our right the village of Leymah, house above house, and row above row, clomb up the hill-side, like many a hamlet seen by me in the happy days of boyhood within the Swiss canton of Ticino, or—but in later and less rosy times—on the slopes of Lebanon. Further up were herds of goats clinging to the mountain ledges, and shepherds loitering among them ; below in the valley, bands of blue-dressed peasant women moved in quest of water from the wells ; while on the beach were boats large and small, drawn up, or ready for the chances of the fishery.

In the afternoon we went on board again, and for the rest of the evening skirted the rocky coast of *Ḳalḥaṭ* or *Ḳalḥooṭ*. Next morning we were off the Gulf of *Ḍebēe*, a magnificent bay, scarcely inferior in beauty to that of Naples; many small villages are jotted on its shores, and behind it circles a panorama of mountains worthy of Sicily.

Before evening we came opposite to a high precipitous peak, situated at a distance of ten to twelve miles from the coast. Hence, southwards, begins the *Bāṭinah*, following the coast as far as *Barkā*, and reaching inland to the slope of *Djebel-Akhdar*. This is by much the richest though not exactly the most important province of 'Omān. Placed with the sea on one side, and the high range of *Djebel-Akhdar* or "the green mountain" on the other, it is better watered than any other district soever of Arabia. The number of towns and villages in the *Bāṭinah* is said to surpass a hundred; from what I saw, I can readily believe it. At least the coast is one continuous line of gardens and habitations, from *Cape Ḳornah*, where the province commences, down to *Barkā*, where it ends; far as the eye can reach nothing appears but cultivation and houses, with a deep background of green and foliage.

At night the breeze dropped, and we lay-to close on shore. With the bright glitter of *Venus*, welcomed by our sailors under the oft-questioned name of *Farkad*, the land wind blew, and on we glided smoothly, steadily, by the coast, while the captain and *Zeyd* pointed out to me village after village, and town after town. Early next morning before sunrise we had reached the roadstead of *Ṣoḥār*, where *Yoosef* and I determined to land for good, and to pursue the rest of our way by land; pity that we did not subsequently keep to our resolution! Bidding a reluctant farewell to *Zeyd* and his companions, we went ashore. Our first enquiries were after the chief, *Fakhar* by name, and a man of great importance. But he was unluckily absent, and we decided to try the hospitality of an old 'Omānee acquaintance of 'Ebn-Khamees.

The house of 'Eysa, for so he was styled, was itself of brick-work, but provided with wooden and thatched out-rooms, a pleasant arrangement for passing the hotter hours of the day, and common in 'Omān, where even at this time of year the weather is very warm: indeed, all in all, the climate is that of

Bombay ; and though the latitude is some degrees to the north, the temperature, from local causes, is not a whit less. A peculiar feature of 'Omānee domestic architecture, and one which has its significance, is the absence of any attempt at privacy, I mean the privacy of the ḥarem. In Nejed, and even in Ḥaṣa, Shomer, and the Djowf, we have seen that a distinction is aimed at between the men's and the women's apartments—not indeed so rigorously as in Syria and Egypt, yet enough to indicate a degree of jealousy, at least an unwillingness to admit a guest into the family life, or to allow him a glimpse into its private mysteries. But in 'Omān the mutual footing of the sexes is almost European, and the ḥarem is scarcely less open to visitors than the rest of the house ; while in daily life the women of the family come freely forward, show themselves, and talk, like reasonable beings, very different from the silent and muffled statues of Nejed and Ri'ad. Hence it follows that the ground-plan of an 'Omānee dwelling differs very materially from that of an ordinary Arab abode, the apartments being often all on a line, and communicating together, not shut off into separate courts ; while the K'hāwah or sitting-room, instead of settling near the gate, takes up its post towards the interior, or even in the heart of the habitation.

Yoosef and I intended setting off that same evening, or at furthest next morning, on our land journey for Mascat ; we should thus have had eight or ten days of road before us. But, to our great good fortune as we imagined, and to our great ill-luck in reality, at the very moment that we were discussing our route and dinner with 'Eysa, a sea captain, bound for Mascat, came in, and promised to take us in his ship, saying that a two days' voyage would land us in the desired port, that the wind was favourable, and that all promised a pleasant and speedy passage. We had already lost so much time in cruising about Mesandum and Ormuz, that we thought the opportunity too good to be neglected. 'Eysa was of the same opinion, and we ended by accepting the captain's offer.

On the third day our captain, who had from the first engagement carried off our baggage on board (a measure which effectually prevented our breaking with him, as we had more than once thought of doing), came to 'Eysa's house and announced sailing time. It was the 6th of March, and we embarked. A

vague presentiment of ill, though there seemed as then no special reason for it, made me "sad as night" on quitting our Ṣoḥār friends who had accompanied us down to the beach; the same feeling was, curiously enough, shared by our host 'Eysa, and he showed it by repeated and pressing requests that we should not fail to write to him on our safe arrival at Mascat and give him good news. Yet no cause appeared for fear, the wind was favourable, the sea quiet, the ship a large one—so large indeed that she had been obliged to anchor a long way out, and we had nearly half an hour's pull in the boat before reaching her.

Our course now lay along the remaining coast of the Bāṭinah, from Ṣoḥār to Barḳa. I was glad to find that our pilot, like most Asiatic navigators, kept the vessel close along shore, so that the fact of our being at sea made us lose but little of anything worth observing on the coast itself. The crew was very interesting. The captain, his nephew, and his men, amounting to nine in all, were partly natives of Soweḃk on the coast, partly from neighbouring villages—Biaḏeeyah of course. Besides these we had on board ten other fellow-passengers: two from Djebel-'Oḳdah, Sonnees but not Wahnābees; they belonged to one of those old Nejdean clans which are scattered through different parts of 'Omān, and most numerous in the Dāhirah. Both were of amiable manners and well-read in Arab lore; very ready too to make friends with all around them; the ultimate destination of their journey was Mecca, which they proposed reaching by the sea and Djiddah, thus circumnavigating about two-thirds of the Peninsula. Fate had in store for one of them a much shorter cruise.

A third passenger was a Nejdean, born at Manfooḥah (my readers will remember the town close to Ri'ad) in 'Aareḏ; he was an ill-conditioned youth, who having, by his own account, quarrelled with his papa, had fled from the paternal roof, and was now, like some refractory lads elsewhere, seeking his fortune in the wide world. The seven remaining seafarers were natives of the Bāṭinah, all men of the lower classes, but cheerful, and talkative like most of their countrymen. The Nejdean alone was ill-tempered and ugly; I should hardly think that his family shed many tears over his absence. In less than an hour we were "Hail fellow, well met!" with all; the ship was large and roomy, a two-master; plenty of provisions and Nar-



gheelahs at disposal were on board ; we hoped for a pleasant and an expeditious voyage.

Our vessel glided on, passing Şohām, Soweyk, and Meşnaa', till on the 8th of the month we were close off Barğa. Thus far the coast had been uniform and level, fringed with palm and cocoa-nut trees, and glistening with whitewashed villages, amid which the pretty castles of the local chiefs shone out to the sun. But near Barğa a range of barren iron-red rocks, at first low, but soon rising in height, appeared lining the shore, and extending eastward all the way to Mascat. A land breeze arose this day, and took us out to sea, till in the afternoon we got among the Sowādah islands—low barren reefs, about three leagues from land ; and there we remained for a few hours, in a dead calm of ominous import.

Towards evening a light south-westerly breeze sprung up, and we spread our sails, hoping by their aid, though the wind was not precisely from the right quarter, to find our way, after some tacking and wearing, into Mascat harbour. But the breeze rapidly grew till it became a strong gale, and in half an hour's time it was a downright storm, baffling all nautical manœuvres. One of our sails was blown to rags, the others were with difficulty got in, and when night closed we were driving under bare poles before a fierce south-wester over a raging sea, while the sky, though unclouded, was veiled from view by a general haze, such as often accompanies a high storm. The passengers were frightened, but the sailors and I rather enjoyed the adventure, knowing that we were by this time far off the coast, clear of all rocks, and in short anticipating nothing worse than a day or two extra at sea before getting round to Mascat. The moon rose, she was in her third quarter, and showed us a weltering waste of waters, where we were scudding entirely alone ; some other vessels which had been in sight at sunset had now totally disappeared. The passengers, and Yoosef-ebn-Khamees among the number, dismayed by the mad roll of the ship, no longer steadied by a stitch of canvas, by the dashing of the waves, and all the confusion of a storm, sat huddled below in the aft-cabin, while the helmsman, the captain, and myself, held on to the ropes of the quarter-deck, and so kept our places as best we might ; the two Sonnees with the Nejdean recited verses out of the Coran ; the 'Omānee sailors laughed,

or tried to laugh, for some of them too began to think the matter serious; no one however anticipated the sudden catastrophe near at hand.

It may have been, to judge by the height of the moon above the horizon, about ten of the night or a little earlier, when we remarked that the ship, instead of bounding and tossing over the waves as before, began to drive low in the water, with a heavy lurch of a peculiar character. One of the sailors approached the captain and whispered in his ear; in reply the captain directed them to sound the hold. Two men went to work and found the lower part of the vessel full of water. Hastily they removed some side boardings, and saw a large stream pouring into the hold from sternwards: a plank had started.

The captain rose in despair full length, and called out "Irmoo," "throw overboard," hoping that lightening the ship of her cargo might yet save her. In a moment the hatchways midships were removed, and all hands busy to execute the last and desperate duty. But no more than three bales had been cast into the deep when a ripple of blue phosphoric light crossed the main deck; the sea was already above board. No chance remained. "Ikhamoo," "plunge for it," shouted the captain, and set the example by leaping himself amid the waves. All this passed in less than a minute; there was no time for deliberation or attempt to save anything.

How to get clear of the whirl which must follow the ship's going down was my first thought. I clambered at once on the quarter-deck, which was yet some feet raised above the triumph of the lashing waves, invoked Him who can save by sea as well as by land, and dived head foremost as far as I could. After a few vigorous strokes out, I turned my face back towards the ship, whence a wail of despair had been the last sound I had heard. There I saw amid the raging waters the top of the mizen-mast just before it disappeared below with a spiral movement while I was yet looking at it. Six men—five passengers and one sailor—had gone down with the vessel. A minute later, and boards, mats, and spars were floating here and there amid the breakers, while the heads of the surviving swimmers now showed themselves, now disappeared, in the moonbeam and shadow.

So rapidly had all this taken place that I had not a moment for so much as to throw off a single article of dress ; though the buffeting of the waves soon eased me of turban and girdle. Nor had I even leisure for a thought of deliberate fear ; though I confess that an indescribable thrill of horror which had come over me when the blue glimmer of the water first rippled over the deck, though scarce noticed at the time, haunted me for months after. But at the actual moment the struggle for life left no freedom for backward-looking considerations, and I was already making for a piece of timber that floated not far off, when on looking around more carefully I descried at some distance the ship's boat ; she had been dragged after us thus far at a long tow, Arab fashion, though who had cut her rope before the ship foundered was what no one of us could ever discover. She had now drifted some sixty yards off, and was dancing like an empty nutshell on the ocean.

Being, like the Spanish sailors in "Don Juan," "well aware That a tight boat will live in a rough sea, Unless with breakers close beneath her lee," I gave up the plank, and struck out for the new hope of safety. By the time I reached her, three of the crew had already established themselves there before me ; they lent me a hand to clamber in ; others now came up, and before long nine men, besides the lad, nephew of the captain, were in her, closely packed. So soon as I found myself in this ark of respite, though not of safety, I bethought me of Yoosef, whom I had not seen since the moment of our wreck. He was not along with us ; but while, scarce hoping, I shouted out his name over the waters to give him a chance of a signal, "Here I am master, God be praised !" answered the dripping head ; and we hauled him in to take his fortune with the rest.

We were now twelve—namely, the captain, his nephew, the pilot, and four of the crew ; the remaining five consisted of one of the passengers from 'Oḳdah—for the other had gone down in the ship, the runaway scapegrace of Manfooḥah, and a native of Soweyk, besides Yoosef and myself. Three others at this moment came swimming up, and wished to enter. But the boat, calculated to contain eight or nine at most, was already over-loaded, especially for so mad a sea, and to admit a new burden was out of the question. However the poor fellows got hold of a spare yard-arm which had floated up from the sunken

vessel; this we made fast to the boat's stern by a rope, and thus took the three in tow clinging to it, two passengers and a sailor.

Four oars were stowed in the boat, and her rudder, unshipped, lay in the bottom, along with a small iron anchor and an extra plank or two. The anchor was without delay heaved overboard by the pilot and myself as a superfluous weight, and so were the planks. Meanwhile some of the sailors proposed to do as much for the passengers; observing, not without a certain show of reason on their side, that with so many on board there could be remarkably little hope of ever reaching shore, that the boat was after all the sailors' right, and the rest might manage on the beam astern as best they could. Fortunately during the voyage I had become a particular friend of the captain and pilot, besides earning the especial good will of a merry sturdy young seaman now in the boat. So I addressed myself to them first, and then to all the crew, and declared the expulsoy proposition to be utterly unjust, wicked, and not fit for discussion; and then, to cut short reply, I proceeded, aided by the pilot, who seconded me manfully throughout, to distribute the oars among the sailors; as indeed it was high time to do in order to steady the boat, over which every wave now broke, threatening to send us to the bottom after her old companion. The captain took post at the rudder, while the pilot and myself set to baling out the water, partly with a leathern bucket which one of the crew had kept the presence of mind to bring with him from the ship (holding the handle between his teeth no less cleverly than Cæsar did his sword off the Alexandrian Pharos), and partly with a large scoop belonging to the boat; both implements were in constant requisition, since every bucketful or scoopful of water thrown out was by the next wave repaid with usury, so fiercely did the storm rage around.

The Sonnee of Djebel-'Okdah sat up in the boat, repeating verses of the Coran; the captain's nephew showed extraordinary spirit for a boy of his age; the sailors managed their oars with much skill and courage, keeping us carefully athwart the roll of the sea; the rest, and I am sorry to say Yoosef-ebn-Khamees for one, were so terribly frightened, that they had completely lost their wits, and lay like dead men amid the water in the boat's bottom, neither raising a head nor saying a word.

Indeed our position, though not wholly without a gleam of



hope, seemed very nearly desperate. We were in an open overloaded boat, her movements yet further embarrassed by the beam in tow, far out at sea, so far as to be quite beyond view of coast, though the high shore hereabouts can be seen at a long distance even by moonlight, with a howling wind, every moment on the increase, and tearing waves like huge monsters coming on as though with purpose to swallow us up—what reasonable chance had we of ever reaching land? All depended on the steerage, and on the balance and support afforded by the oars; and even more still on the providence of Him who made the deep; nor indeed could I get myself to think that He had brought me thus far to let me drown just at the end of my journey, and in so very unsatisfactory a way too; for had we then gone down, what news of the event off Sowādah would ever have reached home? or when?—so that altogether I felt confident of getting somehow or another on shore, though by what means I did not exactly know. The Mahometans on board (they were two)—so at least, poor fellows, their demeanour seemed to show,—prayed as best they might; the Biaḍeeyah mostly kept silence, or exchanged a few words relative to the management of the boat, while the young sailor already mentioned cracked jokes as coolly as though he had been in his cottage on shore, making the rest laugh in spite of themselves, and thus keeping up their spirits—the best thing just then to be done; for to lose heart would have been to lose all.

From an idea that so learned a man (in Arab estimation) as I, ought, among other acquirements, to be better acquainted with the chart than any one else, and perhaps, too, because I seemed less thrown out of my reckonings than most of our party, all referred to me for the direction of our hazardous course. By the stars, a few of which were dimly visible between mist and moonlight, I guessed the whereabouts of the shore. It lay almost due south; but the hurricane had now veered and blew from between west and north; hence we were obliged to follow a south-easterly line, in order to avoid the certain destruction of giving a broadside to the waves. Once sure of this point, I made the men keep our boat's head steady on the tack just explained, and for a long hour we pulled on, baling out the water every moment, and encouraging each other to keep up good heart; that land could not be far off. At last I saw by

the milky moonlight a rock which I remembered sighting on the previous afternoon ; it was the rock of Djeyn, an outlying point of the Sowādah group, and now at some distance on our leeboard. "Courage !" I cried out, "there is Djeyn." "Say it again ; say it again ; God bless you !" they all exclaimed, as though the repetition of the good news would make it of yet better augury ; but I perceived that none of them had his senses enough about him to see the black peak, which now loomed distinct over the sea. "Is it near ?" asked he of Djebel-'Oḳdah. "Close by," I answered, with a slight inaccuracy, which the duty of cheering the crew might, I hope, excuse : "pull away ; we shall soon pass it." But in my own individual thought I much doubted the while whether we ever should, so rapidly did the boat fill from the spray around, while a moment's missteerage would have sent us all to the bottom.

Another hour of struggle : it was past midnight, or thereabouts, and the storm, instead of abating, blew stronger and stronger. A passenger, one of the three on the beam astern, felt too numb and wearied out to retain his hold by the spar any longer ; he left it, and swimming with a desperate effort up to the boat, begged in God's name to be taken in. Some were for granting his request, others for denying ; at last two sailors, moved with pity, laid hold of his arms where he clung to the boat's side, and helped him in. We were now thirteen together, and the boat rode lower down in the water and with more danger than ever ; it was literally a hand's breadth between life and death. Soon after another, Ibraheem by name, and also a passenger, made a similar attempt to gain admittance. To comply would have been sheer madness ; but the poor wretch clung to the gunwale and struggled to clamber over, till the nearest of the crew, after vainly entreating him to quit hold and return to the beam, saying, "It is your only chance of life, you must keep to it," loosened his grasp by main force, and flung him back into the sea, where he disappeared for ever. "Has Ibraheem reached you ?" called out the captain to the sailor now alone astride of the spar. "Ibraheem is drowned," came the answer across the waves. "Is drowned," all repeated in an undertone, adding, "and we too shall soon be drowned also." In fact such seemed the only probable end of all our endeavours. For the storm redoubled in violence ; the baling

could no longer keep up with the rate at which the waves entered, the boat became waterlogged ; the water poured in hissing on every side ; she was sinking, and we were yet far out in the open sea.

"Ikhamoo," "plunge for it," a second time shouted the captain. "Plunge who may, I will stay by the boat so long as she stays by me," thought I, and kept my place. Yoosef, fortunately for him, was lying like a corpse, past fear or motion, but four of our party, one a sailor, the other three passengers, thinking that all hope of the boat was now over, and that nothing remained them but the spar, or Heaven knows what, jumped into the sea. Their loss saved the remainder ; the boat lightened and righted for a moment, the pilot and I baled away desperately, she rose clear once more of the water : those in her were now nine in all—eight men and a boy, the captain's nephew.

Meanwhile the sea was running mountains ; and during the paroxysm of struggle, while the boat pitched heavily, the cord attached from her stern to the beam snapped asunder. One man was on the spar. Yet a minute or so the moonlight showed us the heads of the five swimmers as they strove to regain the boat ; had they done it we were all lost ; then a huge wave separated them from us. "May God have mercy on the poor drowning men," exclaimed the captain : their bodies were washed ashore off Seeb three or four days later. We now remained sole survivors—if indeed we were to prove so.

Our men rowed hard, and the night wore on ; at last the coast came in full view. Before us was a high black rock, jutting out into the foaming sea, whence it rose sheer like the wall of a fortress ; at some distance on the left a peculiar glimmer and a long white line of breakers assured me of the existence of an even and sandy beach. The three sailors now at the oars, and the man of 'Okdah who had taken the place of the fourth, grown reckless by long toil under the momentary expectation of death, and longing to see an end anyhow to this protracted misery, were for pushing the boat on the rocks, because the nearest land, and thus having it all over as soon as possible. This would have been certain destruction. The captain and pilot, well nigh stupefied by what they had undergone, offered no opposition. I saw that a vigorous effort must

be made ; so I laid hold of them both, shook them to arouse their attention, and bade them take heed to what the rowers were about, adding that it was sheer suicide, and that our only hope of life was to bear up for the sandy creek, which I pointed out to them at a short distance.

Thus awakened from their lethargy, they started up, and joined me in expostulating with the sailors. But the men doggedly answered that they could hold out no more, that whatever land was nearest they would make for it, come what might ; and with this they pulled on straight towards the cliff.

The captain hastily thrust the rudder into the pilot's hand, and springing on one of the sailors pushed him from the bench and seized his oar, while I did the same to another on the opposite side ; and we now got the boat's head round towards the bay. The refractory sailors, ashamed of their own faint-heartedness, begged pardon, and promised to act henceforth according to our orders. We gave them back their oars, very glad to see a strife so dangerous, especially at such a moment, soon at an end ; and the men pulled for the left, though full half an hour's rowing yet remained between us and the breakers, and the course which we had to hold was more hazardous than before, because it laid the boat almost parallel with the sweep of the water : but half an hour ;—yet I thought we should never come opposite the desired spot.

At last we neared it, and then a new danger appeared. The first row of breakers, rolling like a cataract, was still far off shore, at least a hundred yards ; and between it and the beach appeared a white yeast of raging waters, evidently ten or twelve feet deep, through which, weary as we all were, and benumbed with the night chill and the unceasing splash of the spray over us, I felt it to be very doubtful whether we should have strength to struggle. But there was no avoiding it ; and when we drew near the long white line which glittered like a witchfire in the night, I called out to Yoosef and the lad, both of whom lay plunged in deathlike stupor, to rise and get ready for the hard swim, now inevitable. They stood up, the sailors laid aside their oars, and a moment after the curling wave capsized the boat, and sent her down as though she had been struck by a cannon-shot, while we remained to fight for our lives in the sea.

Confident in my own swimming powers, but doubtful how



far those of Yoosef might reach, I at once turned to look for him, and seeing him close by me in the water, I caught hold of him, telling him to hold fast on, and I would help him to land. But with much presence of mind he thrust back my grasp, exclaiming, "Save yourself, I am a good swimmer, never fear for me." The captain and the young sailor laid hold of the boy, the captain's nephew, one on either side, and struck out with him for the shore. It was a desperate effort, every wave overwhelmed us in its burst and carried us back in its eddy, while I drank much more salt water than was at all desirable. At last, after some minutes, long as hours, I touched land, and scrambled up the sandy beach, as though the avenger of blood had been behind me. One by one the rest came ashore—some stark naked, having cast off or lost their remaining clothes in the whirling eddies ; others yet retaining some part of their dress. Every one looked around to see whether his companions arrived ; and when all nine stood together on the beach, all cast themselves prostrate on the sands, to thank Heaven for a new lease of life granted after much danger and so many comrades lost.

Then rising, they ran to embrace each other, laughed, cried, sobbed, danced. I never saw men so completely unnerved as they on this first moment of sudden safety. One grasped the ground with his hands, crying out, "Is this really land we are on ?" another said, "And where are our companions ?" a third, "God have mercy on the dead ; let us now thank Him for our own lives !" a fourth stood bewildered ; all their long and hard-stretched self-possession quite gave way. Yoosef had lost his last rag of dress ; I had fortunately yet on two long shirts (one is still by me), reaching down to the feet, Arab fashion. I now gave my companion one, keeping the other for myself ; my red scull-cap had also held firm on my head, so that I was as well off or better than any. "We may count this day for the day of our birth ; it is a new life after death," said the young 'Omānee sailor. "There have been others praying for us at home, and for their sake God has saved us," added the pilot, thinking of his family and children. "True ; and more so perhaps than you know of," replied I, remembering some yet further distant.

While we were thus conversing, and beginning to look around and wonder on what part of the coast we had landed, the distant

sound of a gun was heard on the right. "That must be the morning gun of Seeb," said the captain. Seeb, being a fortified town, and often a royal residence, has the privilege of a garrison and artillery; now from the whereabouts of our wreck opposite Sowādah we could not be very far thence. We were yet discussing this point, when another gun made itself heard from inland. "That must be from the palace at Baṭḥat-Farzah" (the valley of Farzah), said another. "Thoweynee is certainly there, for the palace guns never fire except when the sultan is in residence with his court."

It was now the first glimmer of doubtful dawn, and the wind sweeping furiously along the beach rendered some shelter necessary; for we were dripping and chilled to the bone. So we crept to leeward of a cluster of bushes, and there each dug out for himself a long trench in the sand; and after having thus put ourselves in some degree under cover, we waited for the morning, which seemed as though it would never come. At last the moonlight faded away, and the sun rose, though his rays did not reach us quite so soon as we should have desired, for the creek where we had landed was bordered on either side by high hills, shutting out the horizon. These hills ended in precipices towards the sea; on the left was the very rock on which the despairing impatience of the crew had almost driven us the night before; it looked horrible. The wind yet blew high, and we were shivering with cold in our scanty clothing. Those who, like myself, had come on shore with more than what was absolutely necessary for decency, had shared it with those who had nothing. When the sunbeams at last struck over the hill side on the right, we hastened to warm ourselves and to dry our apparel—a task speedily performed with so slender a wardrobe. Next we reconnoitred the position, with which some of the crew found themselves to be not wholly unacquainted; it was a little to the east of Seeb; but between us and that town was a high and broad range of rocks, on which our naked feet had no great disposition to venture; on the west we were hemmed in by a corresponding barrier. But landwards the valley ran up sandy between the hills, and in that direction appeared an easier path, leading ultimately, so the sailors averred, to the sultan's country palace—the same whence we had heard the night gun, nor could it be very far off. Once at the palace,

all reckoned on the well-known liberality of Thoweynee for obtaining assistance. Thither we resolved to go; yet before setting out we turned back to look once more on the sea, still raging in mad fury. Not a trace of our saviour boat appeared, not a sail in sight, though the day before (a day that now seemed a year ago) there had been many. Ten large vessels, part belonging to the Persian coast, part to the 'Omānee, had gone down besides our own, close to the Sowādah rocks, that very night; three, as I afterwards learned, perished with every soul on board; from one alone the entire crew escaped; the rest lost some more, some less: we had at any rate companions in misfortune. Gazing on the ocean, every one made aloud the ordinary resolution of shipwrecked sailors never to attempt the faithless element again; a resolution kept, I doubt not, as steadily as most such—that is, for a fortnight or three weeks.

We then proceeded to toil southwards across sands and slopes in quest of the king's residence. "A sorry plight," said I to Yoosef, "for us to present ourselves in before his majesty; were the gifts along with us, our visit might be more to the purpose." Yoosef sighed; that part of our misadventure fell indeed mainly on him. For myself, I had of course lost every article retained since our parting from Aboo-'Eysa at Menāmah. What annoyed me more seriously was the loss of all my notes, taken from January 23rd up to the present date, namely March 10th, and herein must lie my apology for a certain amount of omission and incompleteness during the part of my story included between those periods, perhaps even some involuntary inaccuracies. To the disappearance of my cash in hand I was less sensible, though in fact it was scarcely a joke to find oneself penniless with a penniless and nearly naked companion, in a strange land, and far from friends or resources. But all this was a trifle if compared to the mishap of the captain—deprived of ship, cargo, and everything except the shirt on his back; the rest of the crew were, in proportion, no better off. However, several had lost what was far more essential,—their lives, and in comparison with them we might well deem ourselves fortunate.

So we walked on, half merry, half sad, and all very feeble, till an hour or so before noon. At last we crossed a ridge where trees began to mingle with the low bushes of the coast, and suddenly had the Bathāh full in view. It was a pretty and

wooded hollow, amid high peaked granite hills ; below all was green, save in one part of the valley, where a patch of clean sand spread out over some extent. By the side of this, was the palace, strikingly resembling a *château* of Louis XIII's time, such as I have often seen in Central France. It consists of a central pavilion with side wings symmetrically arranged, open balconies running round the first storey, and steps leading up to the principal entrance ; in short, it is the most European-looking construction, that I have found in Arabia. This palace was erected by Sultan Sa'eed, and, I believe, by Western builders under his orders. Around stand long ranges of stables and outhouses. Here, beneath a wing of the edifice and close by a private entrance, sat Thoweynee himself, in the midst of his court, enjoying the morning air in the shade ; before him about three hundred horsemen were engaged in the evolutions and caprices of a mock fight. Tents were pitched here and there among the trees ; all was life, cheerfulness, and security ; a very different scene from that which we had so lately beheld and shared in.

We halted awhile behind a screen of foliage, whence unseen we could ourselves see the king and his attendants. Before long the parade was over, and the cavaliers, after saluting their sultan, rode off to quarters at a little distance. We then advanced ; after a few steps some of the bystanders perceived us, and came up. "Doubtless you belong to one of last night's wrecks," said they ; "we had just been talking about the probable loss of many ships in the storm, and here you are to witness." After this greeting they led us without further preface before Thoweynee.

I could scarcely keep from laughing at the figure I made ; but it was perhaps fortunate for my incognito with Thoweynee, whose royal eyes must have rested times out of number on Europeans of different categories, and who might have likely enough recognized the English traveller if under a better guise, and in more seemly circumstances. But to pick out an Englishman from amid our barelegged castaway band would have required a conjuror ; and Thoweynee, whatever his mother may be, is not that himself. We now stood before him. He was handsomely, even gorgeously, dressed in fine white robes, lightly embroidered with a flowered pattern, and wearing a large and



white Cachemire turban, surmounted by a diamond, with a magnificent golden dagger in his jewelled belt. His person is stout, and his face handsome; its expression clever but dissipated; he looks like what he is, a genuine follower of Epicurus, but one who might have been something much better had he chosen. Shrewdness, good nature, and love of enjoyment make up his whole face, manner, and, it appears, character too. By his side sat a boy of dusky features, but splendidly dressed, his cap set with precious stones; this youth is his eldest son by an Abyssinian concubine. Close by the king was the prime minister and several others of high rank and birth, all dressed in white and gold; while numerous attendants, armed with swords and daggers, stood or sat around.

Of course the captain acted for us the part of spokesman. The king received us with an air of compassion, enquired after the port to which our vessel had belonged, its cargo, its destination; how the ship had come to founder, how many had perished, how we ourselves had escaped; and then, after promising the unfortunate owner a compensation for his loss, gave orders that we should be lodged and taken care of in the palace.

I wished Yoosef to take the word next, and to say something about the presents which he had been charged with, and by whom. But my man wanted courage to come forward, and feared that under the present circumstances he might be held for an impostor, while for my part I thought it not prudent to draw too much notice on myself, especially as I had perceived some north-country looking faces among the attendants. So I kept in the background, and awaited the result. Meanwhile one of the guards came up to Yoosef and myself and offered to be our host; the sailors one after another were each claimed in the same hospitable way. We followed our conductor to his abode; it was among the outbuildings of the palace, a large apartment, and inhabited by half a dozen of the royal swordsmen. Here all set about making us comfortable. I was soon provided with a pair of light trousers and a turban. Yoosef fared equally well; a blazing fire was lighted, and pipes and coffee prepared, while more substantial fare was getting ready. During these operations we had to relate our story over and over again; every one condoled, hoped, and what else is customary on such

occasions. We made a very hearty meal of meat, rice, and saffron, along with raisins, dates, and whatever besides was at hand, and then lay down for a sound nap,—the first since our wreck, for the cold had not permitted us to close our eyes during the morning on the beach.

Two of the sailors made a return visit that very evening to the beach, where they found the broken planks of our boat, dashed to pieces by the surf. Of the ship we never heard or saw more—where she lay, not five but seventy or eighty fathoms deep, if the soundings of the Sowādah rocks be correct.

When I awoke the afternoon was far advanced. I found Yoosef already up, and he proposed a walk to see the palace and its neighbourhood.

We loitered about the Baṭḥah till sunset, when one of the palace attendants presented us and our comrades with a small sum of money for immediate wants, and promise of more if we chose to abide for a day or two the Sultan's leisure. Ebn-Khamees and myself received in hand each a gold tomān, value somewhat under ten shillings English; this would hardly suffice for adventuring on an onward journey of any length, and we thought of waiting and trying the further extent of Ebn-Sa'eed's generosity, when a circumstance occurred which determined me on quitting the vicinity of the palace and the Baṭḥah without delay.

We had just finished our supper, night had closed in, and we were sitting guests and hosts round the fire at coffee, when a well-dressed negro came in, and, after due salutations, presented me with his master's compliments and invitation to honour him with my company. I rose and followed my black conductor, who led me to a neat tent pitched at some distance. There I found two ex-Turkish officers, for both had been in the great Sultan's service, till for reasons best known to themselves they had found the Ottoman army and territory too hot for them, and had, in plain English, deserted. The one had come straight to 'Omān; the other had roamed the world far as Bombay, Calcutta, and even Singapore and Malacca; his peregrinations had procured him a most extensive acquaintance with English, Indians, Malays, and all kind of people. He himself, though once holding a commission in the Ottoman troops, was not of Turkish but Albanian descent. "We noticed you," said he to

me in the broken Arabic peculiar to that class of men, and by which they may readily be recognized, "and concluded from your appearance that you do not, like your companions, belong to this country." This was said with much politeness, and was accompanied by the offer of a silver-mounted Nargheelah, with other minutiae of Eastern courtesy, so that I found myself tolerably at ease, in spite of a remark evidently intended as a prologue to further enquiry. We next entered on a long and lively conversation, wherein I told him what I thought fit to tell, and my new acquaintance, animated by libations of something better than coffee, namely, good Cognac out of a black bottle, to which he and his friend made frequent applications, and which I must confess was not wholly declined by myself under the circumstances, recounted his own past history, his adventures by land and flood, how he had come into Thoweynee's service, and so on, with perhaps a little more fluency than exactness. "In vino veritas,"—sometimes also the reverse. At last the lateness of the hour and my own fatigue furnished me with a decent pretext for retiring, and I took my leave, while my entertainer assured me that next day he would not fail to return the visit, and that we would then have further conversation.

However, I was very far from ambitious of the proposed honour—not that I cared much at the moment whether Thoweynee, his minister (who, as I afterwards learnt, had really his doubts about me, and who had probably given the password of investigation to the Albanian), and all 'Omān too, from Cape Mesandum to Rās-el-Hadd, knew who and what I was, feeling sure from what I had already seen and heard, that such knowledge would breed no immediate harm or hindrance. But the Meteyree and his Nejdeans were just now at court, and I feared lest the news, with extensive Arab amplifications, might find its way to Bereymah, and thence to Nejed, and have ill results, at least for Aboo-'Eysa, who would in that case appear to have been all along, directly and indirectly, by himself and by his men, bear-leader and accomplice to that dreaded monster, a spy. Besides I had yet on hand the appointment to meet Aboo-'Eysa on the Persian coast; Barakāt was still with him, and the consequences of a premature detection might be very disagreeable. So, without explaining to Yoosef matters which nowise concerned him, I gave him to know that it was my high will

and pleasure to leave the Sultan and his court to themselves, and to start the very next morning for Mascat, where doubtless something would turn up in our favour; adding many pertinent sayings about the vanity of putting one's trust in princes, and the like. Yoosef easily allowed himself to be persuaded; he was, in fact, so unhinged by the preceding night, that it cost no difficulty to lead him one way or another like a very child.

Accordingly next morning early we sought a pair of shoes, for my feet did not at all relish the angular pebbles thick-strewn over most of the ground in the Mascat district. But shoes were none to be found, so off we started barefoot, leaving our hosts engaged in their duties of morning parade, and Thoweynee probably asleep. On the second day we reached Mascat, passing through the large town of Maṭraḥ. Mascat, or at least its harbour, forts, and buildings, has been often and sufficiently described. Niebuhr, Welsted, and many others have made here, some a longer, and some a shorter stay; not to mention that English steamers on their backward and forward way between Bombay and Baṣrah, touch here regularly twice in every month, though their anchorage is only for a few hours. Let me here, therefore, cut a long tale short. The catastrophe of my story has been passed; little remains but, after the fashion of Sir Walter Scott, to sum up the fortunes of the survivors, so far as I can here tell them. The hospitality of a Ḥaṣa merchant, Astar by name, and long since a settler in Mascat, provided Yoosef and myself with lodging, board, and raiment. And one evening, while sauntering about the booths of the fair, in quest of a more elegant dagger than that which at the time adorned my waist, I met our old shipmates, the captain and with him two of his crew, now well dressed and in good spirits, having received from the Sultan's liberality enough to render their past misfortune almost advantageous; they were about to return to Soweyk, and recommence afresh the gains and the hazards of a sea life; I trust under better auspices.

After about a week passed at Mascat I began to consider seriously with Yoosef what was next to be done. But my companion had now only one thought, namely, how to return without delay to his patron at Aboo-Shahr; the journey had no longer any attractions for him, either of profit or pleasure; while the terrors of the shipwreck and the hardships which



followed had made him look ten years older than he had appeared a fortnight before. For myself also I began to think that we had done and suffered enough for this time, and that the rest might fairly be left to a future occasion ; the more so since the mere return from Mascat to Bagdad, and thence to Syria, was a tolerably long prospect, above all in the summer season now drawing on. In addition an indescribable feeling of weariness and low spirits, for which I could not then account, but which was in reality the "incubation" (to use a medical term) of a bad typhoid fever, hung about me, and made me still more indisposed to additional excursions. Thus I surrendered the idea of investigating 'Omān. A sea-captain of Koweyt, whose vessel was to sail with the first fair wind, offered to carry us to Aboo-Shahr, while he refused to take any passage-money in requital : saying that it would be a shame to exact payment from men who had so lately suffered shipwreck.

At last, on March 23rd, towards evening, we took leave of our host Astar, and of other kind friends ; and while I walked down to the harbour accompanied by Yoosef and by four or five particular acquaintances, I felt that my steps were finally homeward bound in good earnest. Nor was that feeling wholly unmixed with regret, nor without a hope, however distant, of once more revisiting these strange and pleasant lands. We embarked in a negro canoe, and pulled for about two hours round cape and headland till we sighted the ship's lantern and climbed up her dark sides long after nightfall. That same night, while we cleared out of the outmost harbour and stood for the open sea, I watched the Southern Cross, the lower limb of which is here four or five degrees above the horizon ; though had it been down to the very water's edge, the clear atmosphere would have rendered every star visible. It was an old friend, seen again for a short space after an absence of many years, and soon to be hidden from sight, not from remembrance.

The captain and his crew kept up from first to last the same friendly and courteous ways of which they had given us a specimen at Mascat, nor was there reason for any complaint against our numerous fellow-passengers, mostly Indians from Lucknow and its neighbourhood. The ship was large, clean, and this time at least, watertight ; well for us that she was so, for about

half way up the Gulf we encountered a tempest, worse perhaps than that which sent our old 'Omānee craft to the bottom. But I was now taking very little notice of good or bad around ; for the fever which I had contracted at Mascat here declared itself in full force. Nor was I the only sufferer in the ship ; one of the Indians had taken it also while on shore, and died before we reached our destination. Sailors and captain did their best to nurse me ; but beyond what relief sympathizing faces and kind words can give, an Arab ship has little wherewithal to meet the requirements of a sick man. At last we anchored before Aboo-Shahr ; the crew carried me, for I could no longer move, on their shoulders, and Yoosef-ebn-Khamees led the way to the residence of Aboo-'Eysa, who had in his own mind put us down long since in the lengthy catalogue of others, men and vessels, who had perished on the night of March 9th. Barakāt had already gone on to Baṣrah, and thence to Bagdad, where he was awaiting me ; Aboo-'Eysa, with his Persian convoy of pilgrims, about a hundred and twenty in number, was in a few days to leave Aboo-Shahr for Baḥreyn, and so to Ḥaṣa.

Here I received the latest news regarding the fall of 'Oneyzah and the triumph of the Wahhābees in the West. But the fever, now at its height, left me small leisure to care for events near or far ; in fact, I was constantly, with few and doubtful intervals, in that state of half-delirium so wearisome in typhoid illness. The Indian steamer arrived on April 10th, and took me to Baṣrah, where some sailors put me on board a river steam-boat, then commanded by Captain Selby of the Indian Navy. Here generous and open-hearted kindness, that proper badge of an Englishman and a sailor, supplied me with good treatment and medical assistance of every sort, or my journey would probably have ended, like the wanderings of many another traveller, in quitting the world altogether. Our voyage up the Tigris, now swollen by spring inundations, lasted seven days ; on the eighth we landed at Bagdad, where the hospitality of Captain Selby and other friends, English, Swiss, and French, went far to restore me, if not to perfect health, at least to a favourable convalescence. Here, after a few days, I met once more my old and faithful companion Barakāt ; his joy on seeing me again after so many sinister reports, and fear outbalancing hope, may be easier imagined than described. I should notice that news of

the March storm had reached Bagdad, where many enquiries awaited me regarding the loss or escape of sundry vessels in which the merchants of that town had a special interest.

Our return route lay by Kerkook, Mosoul, Mardeen, Diar-Bekr, Orfah, and thence round to Aleppo and Syria. It was a track new to Barakāt and myself, and hence full of charm to us, but might be less so to my readers ;—rendered, I doubt not, sufficiently familiar with that part of the world by numerous and better written narratives than mine. Indeed it is only the apology of novelty that can excuse to myself what, remembering the wealthy interest of the land, I must feel are at the best but imperfect outlines of Central and Eastern Arabia, from Ma'ān to Mascat. Much, how much ! is left untold ;—reserved, I trust, for some more fortunate traveller than he who now bids the reader a hearty Farewell.

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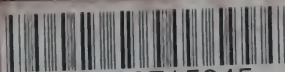
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